

Grace to you and peace from God our Father and from our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. Amen.

Dear Brothers and Sisters in Christ,

The question I want to start with today that I'd like you to think about is this: Are you a user / consumer or are you a provider / supplier? We the difference when we use this in an earthly sense. With a cell phone, you get your service from a provider. You are the user. Verizon or Sprint or whomever, provides infrastructure and a network so that you can receive something... namely the ability to make and receive phone calls, surf the internet, etc. They are the provider.

When you go to HyVee, you go there as a consumer. HyVee and its smiling employees provide a building and stock it with food and supplies that you need. You buy them.

At a restaurant, you go there to be served. The food is brought to you. Someone else does the work, you are on the receiving end.

When it comes to the kingdom of God, there are also users / consumers and there are providers / suppliers. In the kingdom of God, there are those who

- proclaim the gospel to you.
- There are those who volunteer in church in various aspects.
- There are those who lead music in worship.
- There are those who teach the children.

These are all provider or supplier positions in the church. These the people who are giving in love what Christ has given for the benefit of others.

In the kingdom of God, there are also users or consumers... those who are on the receiving end.

- When you listen to a message like this, you are receiving.
- When those who volunteer in the church do something for your benefit, you are on the receiving end of the equation. You are a consumer.
- When your soul is lifted up by the music in the service, you are a consumer.
- When your kids are taught by our teachers, you receive an amazing blessing.

Now the question I want to pose to you is this: are you a consumer in the church? Or are you a provider / supplier. Do you serve? Or are you being served? Now, let me say up front that I don't want to present these two sides as if they are oppositional or as if one is good and the other bad. In fact, the truth is they are complementary. They are both necessary. Ideally we will sometimes be a server and sometimes we will be served.

Yet I pose the question because if we don't intentionally think about this, we all gravitate toward the sideline. Our nature is to lay low and let others. In fact some are in the habit of being life long consumers while never entering into the supplier or provider part of the church.

Today, I'd like you to give this serious thought.

But before we go too much further, let me acknowledge there may be guests here today. There may be some who are new to Christianity. I'm not directing this toward you. We're happy you're here. We only want you to be served. We want you to sit back and be blessed. Hear the good news of Jesus. Process this teaching and be amazed at it. We're not going to ask you to do anything. But everyone else, listen, because some of today's message is going to be challenging to you. It's going to force you to reevalutate and think twice.

The message title today is simply this: “Sent Out.” We’re going to read in Mark 6:7-13. Let me fill you in on some background. It’s always hard to figure out times exactly, but this is roughly a year, year and a half after Jesus called his disciples to follow him. His popularity is growing. The disciples had the benefit of being taught by Jesus himself for a decent amount of time now. But this whole time they were only consumers. They received what Jesus gave. They were being served by Jesus.

But all of that changes when Jesus sent out the 12.  
Listen to Mark 6:7-12.

7 Calling the Twelve to him, he sent them out two by two and gave them authority over evil spirits.  
8 These were his instructions: “Take nothing for the journey except a staff—no bread, no bag, no money in your belts.

9 Wear sandals but not an extra tunic.

10 Whenever you enter a house, stay there until you leave that town.

11 And if any place will not welcome you or listen to you, shake the dust off your feet when you leave, as a testimony against them.”

12 They went out and preached that people should repent.

13 They drove out many demons and anointed many sick people with oil and healed them.

Jesus **sent them out**. Could we just start by making this general observation: when we hear the concept of being sent out, we naturally push back. What’s the opposite of “Sent out?” It’s “Stay in” isn’t it? Staying in is what we is comfortable, it’s what we’re good at, it’s what’s natural.

As individuals, we gravitate toward staying in and looking in.

- If you need to find the strength for something, where do you look? The world tells you to look inside. Change yourself. Improve yourself. There are a thousand ways. But you can do it!
- Are you looking for truth? Look inside. You need to find yourself. You need to find your own way. Whatever you decide is true and works for you, well, that is true for you. Truth is relative and can only be found within you. That’s the world’s teaching.
- Do you need to relax and find peace? Meditate on yourself.
- Are you looking for a meaningful and purposeful life? Well no one can give that to you but you. Find your way. Look inside. Life is what you make it. Sound familiar?

Lies. All lies. In contrast to this, Jesus tells us the strength, the truth, the peace and true life can only be found **outside** of ourselves. “Jesus called the 12 to him” and then “he sent them out.” By sending them out, the presupposition is that the people they were going to needed something outside of themselves, right? If the people could find strength, truth, peace and life by themselves, Jesus would not have sent them out, he would have had them stay in. But for people to receive something essential, the disciples had to be sent out.

But note: Before being sent, Jesus called them to himself. And this is key. Before we can be sent out to share God’s truth and salvation with others we first must spend time at the feet of Jesus listening to what he has to say. And here’s what he will tell you when you gather near to Jesus:

The answers are not within you. They are outside of you. The reason is that within you is **weakness**. You lack the strength to resist temptation, change your life, and line up with the will of God. You can’t do it. The strength is not in you. **Truth** is not in you. Instead we lie to ourselves about how good we are. Instead of genuine change, we develop better filters so we look better on the outside, but inside is rottenness and deceit. **Peace** is not in you, but turmoil and anxiety. **Purpose** escapes you because you can’t figure out what life is all about. Look inside and you’re left hopeless.

When we finally come to grips that the answers are not in us, when we despair of self, when we finally stop looking at self for answers, and lift up our heads to God, and tells us the awesome truth that the answers are *not* in us. They are outside of us. The answers are in him.

His answer to our weakness, lies, anxiety and hopelessness: Jesus Christ. Learn to Jesus and you will learn to know that he was **strong**. He overpowered the strong-man, Satan and never yielded to temptation. He is **truth**. He speaks the word of the Father and reveals the way of salvation. Salvation is found in him. His perfect life he gave up as the payment for all of your sin. He made himself the substitute for your sin. His death on cross is the complete payment for all of your sin. His resurrection is the guarantee that you have a new status before God and a new identity as “saint” and “child of God. All of this give you true inner **peace**. This assurance doesn’t depend on you and your performance, it is God’s work, God’s declaration through his Son that you are holy, forgiven and fit for heaven. And this gives you your **purpose**. Your meaning and purpose in life are not self-made, they come from God. Your purpose in life is to live for him. You live for him by dedicating all you are and all you have to him and to his glory. Such a life dedicated to God is a life dedicated to service to others.

And now we’ve come full circle. After you have come to Jesus and received. After you have been taught these glorious truths which are outside of yourself... now you are ready to be **sent out**. You are ready to lead others to stop staying in, where there are no answers and there is no hope. You are sent out to lead others out... to look up away from self and see Jesus.

Jesus’ disciples were ready for this. They may not have felt ready. I imagine they weren’t particularly excited to be sent out at first. But Jesus sent them out. And he did so giving them specific directions. We’ll do well to pay attention.

- Jesus sent them out even though they were just 12. Don’t be afraid to start small, and never say your contribution doesn’t matter. Jesus sent out 12 men. 12! That’s all. But it grew... exponentially.
- Jesus sent them out in pairs to work as a team. For encouragement. Cooperation.
- When Jesus sent them out, he told them to travel light. They only took the bare necessities. Two reasons: 1) Nothing that will distract or deter them. 2) Nothing that will draw their trust from him. Jesus sends us out and wants us to be undistracted. He wants us to place full confidence in him.
- When Jesus sent them out, he sent them with his authority. They proclaimed the gospel with his authority. They were even given the authority of Jesus to heal and drive out demons. Understand this: when Jesus send you out, you go with his authority.
- Content: We must preach repentance. This is so important. They went out and preached. What? That people should repent. Luke’s Gospel says they were sent out to proclaim the gospel... the good news of the Kingdom. [What does that mean?] Repent means to look afterwards and see the horribleness of our past. To be honest about our sins. To turn back and see it and acknowledge it. To change one’s mind regarding it. These aren’t different things. These are two ways of describing the same thing. This is what we are sent out to do.

Now listen: As Jesus sent out the 12, now Jesus sends you out. Have you already been gathered to Jesus? Have you heard his truth? Have you repented and believed the gospel of Jesus Christ? Are you his child bound for heaven? Well now Jesus sends you. There are still millions of dying souls out there, *and you personally know dozens of them!* This is your personal mission field.

We were all shocked to hear the news of what took place in Aurora, CO. A man entered a theater during the premier showing of the Batman movie. He mercilessly opened fire. At least 12

people were killed and over 50 wounded. This hits us hard, doesn't it? No one went to the movies that night expecting to die. 12 did.

Our time on earth is short. It might be easier us to cower, and to stay in. But Jesus sends you out. He sends you out to your friend with marital difficulties contemplating divorce. He sends you out to your co-worker who isn't going to church. He sends you out to the neighbor who is into the pleasures of this world, but has no concept of the eternal life ahead. He's sending you out to the person you know who is run down because of life's circumstances. How long do these people have here on earth yet? We don't know, but our task is urgent. Now is not the time to stay in, fellow disciples of Jesus. Jesus has called you to himself and now he has sent you out. No longer be just a consumer in the church, but a supplier and provider. Jesus has already called you to come and see. And you have! But now understand he has also sent you out to go and proclaim, to love and to serve.

With his strength. With his truth. With his peace. With divine purpose. You are... sent out. Amen.