Pastor Jamie's Sermon

Good Shepherd Church, June 28, 2026
"The Sent Church"

Young at Heart Message

Today's Gospel message comes on the heels of the scripture passage I preached about two weeks ago in which Jesus basically says "congratulations, you're Apostles! Now I'm throwing you to the wolves."

Today's passage talks about hospitality – those who welcome the Apostles also welcome Jesus, and ultimately God – the One who sent Jesus.

But in order to better understand what this passage means, we need to understand something about the world in which the Apostles lived.

Jesus isn't asking these men to follow him and take his message to people without significant personal sacrifice.

This isn't a part-time side gig. This isn't a situation where the Apostles can keep working – making a living – and just spread the Word in their free time.

Jesus is asking them to leave their livelihoods – the sole way that they earn income for themselves and their families – to do this work.

Work that doesn't pay. At least not in the traditional way.

So, what that means is they must rely completely on the kindness of strangers for food, clothing, and other necessities.

They are being asked to become itinerant. Their survival depends on people's willingness to provide for them, rather than providing for themselves.

So, let's put ourselves into that situation for a moment.

If we imagine what the world was like for the Apostles, we at least imagine that people are somewhat accustomed to welcoming strangers into their homes.

There was no internet. There were no phones. There weren't even fax machines. There was no efficient means of communicating with people, so if you showed up in a new place and needed a place to stay, you had to knock on a door and ask.

Society was more communal at that time. They fed the homeless – women and children especially who were in need.

What was good for one was good for all, at least a bit more than we are used to today. Keeping people fed and at least somewhat provided for kept everyone healthier.

Caring for people helped to prevent the spread of disease and illnesses that could spread to everyone.

So, there was at least some precedent and mutual understanding that if someone knocked on the door, most homes would at least be willing to provide what they could.

And, as the scripture says, if people aren't willing to offer hospitality, well… there was no need to get upset. God would handle them later.

In other words, simply move on to the next house or the next town. Eventually, someone will welcome you.

This was more or less a given.

But, imagine this scenario today. How well might that go?

Jesus arrives, recruits you to be a disciple, expects you to quit your job or to leave your home and family, and then expects you to rely solely on other people for your survival.

Imagine what that might entail.

You no longer have access to money, your own food, your own bed, your family, your own clothing, etc.

So, in order to survive and spread the Word about Jesus, you now need to knock on doors to try to get food, shelter, a place to sleep, laundry, etc.

How does that feel? Is this even possible today?

It would be extremely difficult, I would think. It would be difficult for many reasons:

1. People are not accustomed to strangers knocking on their doors, let alone having to feed, house, and clothe them.

2. People tend to judge those who don't have shelter, the ability to feed themselves, etc.

3. We are accustomed to a certain standard of living. If we suddenly lose access, at this point in time we might actually suffer more – or at least, we might feel like we are suffering more.

4. We too would be more likely to get sick or even die if we could not find provisions based solely on the kindness of others.

5. This is perhaps the hardest truth of all: we cannot be confident that people actually *will* help us – we cannot be confident that people will even answer their door, let alone invite us in, let alone feed us and shelter us.

And, on the flip side – imagine if an itinerant person claiming to be a disciple of Jesus knocked on your door and asked you to come inside.

Imagine that you do invite them inside, but then they ask for water and food. That might not be so bad, but they also need a place to sleep for the night, and maybe even money or food to get them by until they can find someone else to help them.

Many people today wouldn't even get to step one: answer the door. And if they do, most will not go so far as to invite a stranger inside.

Why? Well, there is significant concern, fear, and worry that the person at your door might have harmful intentions.

We are concerned about our own safety and wellbeing. Often, our own safety and wellbeing comes before everyone else's, whether we want to admit it or not.

It is simply the world we live in.

So, as we are talking about these scripture passages, I think it's worth understanding the sacrifices that Jesus is asking people to make.

And while it's true that we live in a very different world today than the world Jesus was born into, it is still important to understand just how much Jesus was asking his disciples to sacrifice to do this work.

Yes, Jesus promises they will be rewarded, but he also doesn't tell them that it will be easy.

In fact, if you remember from the sermon a couple weeks ago, Jesus warns them that there will be trouble, that this will not be easy for them, and in fact, they might be making significant personal sacrifices, including imprisonment or even death.

The Message

The Gospel of Matthew assumes that the church is a missional church.

In other words, the assumption here is that the church is a "sent" church.

Jesus sends his disciples out into the world. He doesn't say "stay home and try to let your neighbours and friends know about me when you can."

No, he sends them "to the wolves," so to speak.

Jesus sends them door to door, town to town, over and over again, spreading the Word and doing good deeds, sharing the Good News with everyone they possibly can.

In Matthew's understanding, there is simply no other way to be the church.

There have been missional church movements throughout history.

In fact, the Moravian Church is well known for the missionary work they did (and still do) globally. It's part of the reason why the Moravian Church exists in Canada today.

And of course, there are movements within Christianity today to make the church more missional again.

There is growing awareness that mission is not just a program of the church – it should be the defining purpose of everything the church does.

What does it mean to be a "sent church" in today's world?

It can't mean "leave everything behind and go spread the Word" in today's world. It's just not realistic or safe.

But, I also don't think it means "sit comfortably in worship and wait for people to walk through your church doors."

There must be some kind of middle ground, and this is what the missional church movement is trying to figure out.

What might happen if we stopped expecting people to walk through our doors and instead, we stepped out?

Certainly we welcome anyone who *does* walk through our doors!

But is there more we could be doing to become a “sent church.” A missional church. A church that takes mission beyond our own walls and extends that outward?

What might that look like?

I don’t necessarily have the answers. I have lots of thoughts on what that could look like. But this question is one that really must be answered in community and conversation together.

So maybe, in order to answer this question, we start with conversations with one another.

What if we shared our stories – our stories of finding this church or the church in general, or our stories of receiving hospitality, or our stories of encounters we’ve had with missional work at other churches.

What if we started to get excited about the possibilities? What if we started small?

Perhaps we’ve already started small. We stepped out of our church walls to the parking lot to offer the garage sale to the community. And, in doing so, we also offered free food.

It might seem very small. To some, it might not even seem like we really stepped beyond our church walls at all.

But if we want to be a “sent church” – if we want to be able to say “here we are, God! Send us!,” then we need to be in conversation about what that might look like and what those small steps might be.

And, we need to feel *good* about the small steps we *do* take!

We could wonder why we would eat the cost of food and not try to make up for it, or we could feel great about feeding our neighbours and welcoming them to our event.

We *should* feel great about stepping outside of our church walls, welcoming strangers, feeding them, and receiving deep gratitude.

If that isn’t doing what Jesus asked of us in today’s world, I don’t know what is!

Our garage sale might be a fundraiser, too, but it is one small step toward being a “sent church.”

So let’s celebrate that, and then let’s start talking together about how we might be able to continue to be a “sent church.”

There's no wrong answers here. There's nothing wrong with conversation. There's nothing wrong with dreaming.

Ideas are just ideas until we decide to move them forward. Our community garden is another example of feeding strangers.

We already do it in small ways. I think today's passage is simply asking us to look closer at what it means to be a "sent church."

And, are there other possibilities for fulfilling this humble call?

This is the beauty of being part of a church family. We get to wonder together, grow together, and serve together.

So, as we leave this worship space today and enter into the "mission field," may we begin to wonder together how we might continue to build on the things we already do to offer even more to our community.

May we build on our hospitality.

May we build on our kindness and our welcoming environment and find new ways to take that same kindness and welcome outside of our church.

May we become disciples in small ways that may make big impacts on our communities.

May we be a "sent church" – bringing kindness, hospitality, and joy to everyone we meet. Amen.

Let us pray:

God who calls us by name, help us to hear your call. Help us to hear your call both personally and as a church. Guide us and help us understand what it might mean for us to be a "sent church" in our context. Help us to have open and honest conversations with each other, exploring new possibilities and sharing ideas together. Help us live into your Word. In your holy name, we pray. Amen.