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THE EFFECT OF PRAYER: SANCTIFIED AND SENT

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We are continuing with our focus on prayer, and we are on the third week of a five-week series of preaching through the practice of prayer and what that means in our lives. We've been thinking about, not only prayer, but prayer for the world.

As we have gone through this practice the last couple of weeks, I've suggested to you that the goal of prayer is to glorify God, and that we glorify God, not only in our motivation for our prayers, but by praying constantly, by affirming our absolute dependence on Him, and by allowing Him to reveal Himself as the God of compassion and grace.

Last week we talked about the method of prayer: what it is that we do while we are praying. In the midst of that, I suggested to you that the practice of prayer is about knowing God and, especially, knowing God by name as Father, Son and Spirit. And, when we come to know God by name, we also begin to know ourselves. So, we talked about the knowledge of our self that we gain through prayer as well.

Today I want to talk about the effect of prayer: what happens when we pray and how prayer--not the effect of an individual prayer, but the accumulated effect of a life of prayer--begins to shape our lives,. We are continuing with some very specific focuses in Scripture in the New Testament in the seventeenth chapter of John and in the Old Testament in the conversations between God and Moses.

We will pick up right where we left off last week. If you recall, last week when we talked about Moses, this is his first encounter with God. He is 80 years old when he is on Mount Sinai and sees a bush that is burning but not consumed. He turns aside to see this thing and, when he does, God begins to speak to him.

We suggested last week that the two essential questions that Moses asks God in this experience are: (1) Who are you? and (2) Who am I? And God gives two gifts to Moses. He tells him his name: "I am that I am, Yahweh." And then He tells him, "I will be with you. I will be with you." This morning, we are going to talk about what God asks Moses to do and how he equips him. Hear the word of the Lord:

Exodus 3:16-4:5

Go and assemble the elders of Israel, and say to them, "The LORD, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, of Isaac, and of Jacob, has appeared to me, saying: I have given heed to you and to what has been done to you in Egypt. I declare that I will bring you up out of the misery of Egypt, to the land of the Canaanites, the Hittites, the Amorites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, a land flowing with milk and honey."

They will listen to your voice; and you and the elders of Israel shall go to the king of Egypt and say to him, "The LORD, the God of the Hebrews, has met with us; let us now go a three days' journey into the wilderness, so that we may sacrifice to the LORD our God." I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders that I will perform in it; after that he will let you go. I will bring this people into such favor with the Egyptians that, when you go, you will not go empty-handed; each woman shall ask her neighbor and any woman living in the neighbor's house for jewelry of silver and of gold, and clothing, and you shall put them on your sons and on your daughters; and so you shall plunder the Egyptians.'

Then Moses answered, 'But suppose they do not believe me or listen to me, but say, "The LORD did not appear to you." ' The LORD said to him, 'What is that in your hand?' He said, 'A staff.' And he said, 'Throw it on the ground.' So he threw the staff on the ground, and it became a snake; and Moses drew back from it. Then the LORD said to Moses, 'Reach out your hand, and seize it by the tail' — so he reached out his hand and grasped it, and it became a staff in his hand — 'so that they may believe that the LORD, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you.'

Now, in the New Testament, we are continuing with our focus in the seventeenth chapter of the Gospel of John. By now you are very familiar with the context. This is the prayer that Jesus prays right before he goes out to the Garden of Gethsemane to be betrayed and arrested. It is the longest prayer that Jesus ever prays in Scripture. We are going to pick up with our prayer just where we left off last week:

John 17:14-19

I have given them your word, and the world has hated them because they do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world, but I ask you to protect them from the evil one. They do not belong to the world, just as I do not belong to the world. Sanctify them in the truth; your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, so that they also may be sanctified in truth.

This is the Word of the Lord. Thanks be to God.

So I decided (this isn't related to the sermon) after preaching two weeks in a row, that on the third week I didn't have to wear a sport coat. I hope that you will kind of go with me and be okay with that. I have a friend who is a Presbyterian pastor but most recently served as the senior pastor of a large Lutheran congregation. We used to get together fairly regularly when he was still stationed here. We would talk about our different calls in our churches and what was similar or different. And he said an interesting thing to me one day. He said, "Jim, sometimes I worry that people in my church respect me as a pastor too much."

I said, "Okay, that is an interesting worry. Tell me what you mean by that." He said, "Well, in my tradition, a very conservative Lutheran church, there is a very exalted view of the pastor and what the pastor's role is. And it is also a heavily military church with a lot of Army folks, and so they have strong sense of hierarchy. Sometimes I just feel like maybe I get respected too much." I said, "I'm not seeing this as a problem exactly."

"Jim, let me tell you a story." He said, "A few months ago, I was having a conflict with the guy in charge of taking care of the grounds of the church. Overall, I felt like he was doing his job well, but the main thing that was bothering me was cutting the grass. I just felt the grass was never cut on time and that it never looked good. No matter how much I asked this person to do the work, he just never

would. Finally, one day I decided I was going to do it myself. So I got on my riding lawn mower on this huge church property that we have, and I started mowing the grass.”

Now their church is located on sort of a major road. As he was mowing the grass he said, “In the first five minutes, four cars pulled over. This is in the middle of lunch hour. Four cars pulled over. People in this church saying, ‘Pastor, what are you doing? Is everything okay? What is going on? Why are you out here mowing the grass?’ I said, ‘It is okay. I just thought it needed to get done and I wanted to do it. It is not a big deal, everything is fine. I am just mowing the grass.’

“One of those four people got out of his car and said, ‘Pastor, no, no, no; you should never have to do this. It is my lunch break; I’ll mow the grass for you. You go back to work; this is beneath you. Pastor, you shouldn’t have to be mowing the grass.’ I said, ‘Are they taking new pastors at your church? I still don’t see this as a bad thing.’ He said, ‘No, it is a great thing.’ The problem is that sometimes they are so convinced that some things are beneath me that they also believe some things I do are above them.”

And he went on to share that he felt that very often the people in this church didn’t feel like they had what they needed to do the work of God. That they would be glad to do things like cutting the grass for Him as long as he (the pastor) could do what they saw as the *real* work of God. They somehow didn’t feel qualified or equipped or able for it. They felt like it was above them. Kind of an interesting challenge.

Nicky Gumbel, who’s the pastor in England who really made Alpha hugely popular, has a great line. He says that many times when we go to church it is like going to a basketball game. You’ve got ten thousand people who desperately need exercise watching ten people who desperately need a rest. And sometimes church can feel like

that. Right? Sometimes it is because we don't feel worthy or able or to get involved in the work of the church, and sometimes it is because we don't know where we are supposed to get involved. We don't know how to get plugged in; we don't know what God wants us to do.

I think Jesus wanted to tackle both of those challenges for us this morning. In His prayer, he asks two things that really grab me. He says, "Sanctify them in the truth, your word is truth." And then He says, "As you have sent me into the world so I have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself that they also may be sanctified in truth." As we are trying to figure out what our role in the church is, as we are trying to figure out what we are able to do and supposed to do, I think that those two ideas of being sanctified and being sent are critical for us.

I think they help us shape what it is that Christ calls us to do as His people. And I think those are things that grow out of our understanding of a praying life, of a growing relationship with God. Now on some level, the idea of being sanctified is sort of a complicated thing. We had a class here on Wednesday night last week where I talked about what sanctification means. I suggested that a sort of working definition was the process that we begin: we cooperate with the Holy Spirit after Jesus brings us salvation. So Jesus saves us apart of any work of our own, and then after He saves us we receive the Holy Spirit. And then together with the Holy Spirit we cooperate in this process.

It is a process of becoming more and more shaped into the image of Jesus. It's looking more and more like Christ in our lives. That process of sanctification always has two components. One component is a transformational component. It is something that happens dramatically. It is what allows us to be adopted as part of God's family, as God's sons and daughters, and to call God our Father.

I shared as well on Wednesday night that I have a dog I got from the SPCA about nine years ago now. His name is Guinness. He is black and tan. We did not name him but it is a great name. When we got Guinness from the SPCA, they used an interesting word. We went to buy a dog, and they told us we were adopting a family member. We said, "Okay but really we just want to buy a dog. I don't know about this whole adopting language." And they said, "It is just a way of helping you understand how valuable this pet is in your family." I said, "Okay, I'm fine with that." But now I have two other children. We actually were creepy enough that we talked about Guinness as our son for a while--which is weird.

But, we have two other children now, Jonathan and Zoe, and there is no question in my mind that if anything ever happens to us, Guinness is not in the chain of succession. He is not going to be inheriting anything that we have. It just skips him. It is because he is a different kind of thing. He is not really a family member like Jonathan and Zoe are family. Well, the same thing is true for us. When we call God our Father when we are adopted as His sons and daughters, something has to change because God can't adopt a human anymore than a human can adopt a dog. Right? We are different things.

When the Holy Spirit comes in our lives after we accept Christ as our Savior, something changes in us. We are no longer merely human anymore. We are like a little Christ. That is actual what Christian means, "little Christ." We are like a little Christ because we are both human and God. The Holy Spirit lives inside us and we are transformed into a new creation, Paul says. That new creation, that new life with this Spirit is what allows us to be adopted into God's family. He literally takes a dog and makes it a person as well as a dog. So He can be fully incarnated.

That is what the Holy Spirit does for us. And that is a dramatic, instantaneous transformation that happens when the Spirit comes.

But there is another component of what the spirit does that is not so dramatic. You see, the Spirit does this dramatic change at the level of our being, our “ontos”. But at the level of our behavior, there is a much more gradual process. I used to be merely human and now I am human and a little bit God. At the same time, my behavior still seems pretty human.

And to help understand what the Holy Spirit does in that, I like to use the illustration of a car with a bad alignment. If you have ever driven a car with a bad alignment, it is an incredibly frustrating thing because, no matter how hard you try to keep your car going straight, you’re constantly having to make corrections and turn and jerk the wheel. Now imagine if you are riding in a car with terrible alignment, and, no matter how well you try to drive, no matter how much you want to be in the lane, you simply can’t do it. You simply can’t keep the car on the straight and narrow. What Christ does when he sends the Holy Spirit is He fixes our alignment. He makes it possible for us once again to follow God faithfully, to drive, to live the way we were suppose to live.

The challenge is that we still have a lifetime of bad driving habits. We still have a lifetime of driving in a way that is no longer necessary. And we still live in a world where people have bad alignments and bad driving habits. And so it is not an instantaneous change. What He does is He makes it possible for us to begin to shape our lives in the life of Christ. He makes it possible for us to begin that process of behavioral transformation.

Now, the process of being sanctified, of having the Holy Spirit come into us and transform us and shape us and change us, is also, I think, imminently connected to the process of being sent. And Jesus makes that connection very, very clear in His prayer. I would suggest to you that most of us most of the time like the idea of being sanctified. We all have that one sin that we want to hold on to, that we really enjoy, or that one bad habit we haven’t chosen to get rid of. But, in

general, most of us like the idea of changing our lives so that we are shaped in the life of Christ. Most of us like the idea of getting rid of our sin, of taking on the benefits the fruit of the spirit. But that idea of being sent isn't always as popular. In fact, very often I think that instead of wanting to be sent, we want to be removed. We want to be pulled out of the world. We want to be in our safe little cocoon where we don't have to deal with the evil and the secularism and the stuff out there.

Yet Jesus says that being sanctified and being sent are related. That you can't be one, without the other. To stick with the car analogy, it is a little bit as though, after the Holy Spirit comes and fixes the alignment of our car, we choose to say, "Thank you, Spirit. Let me park the car in the driveway and look at it for the rest of my life. That is not the purpose of the transformation.

The purpose of the transformation is so that we can drive well, so that we can live our life so that we can be sent out into the world. This morning I want to think about what it means not only to be sanctified but to be sent. And where we are called to go. What we are called to do as the people of God.

I had a wonderful conversation with a member of our church this past Wednesday after ID who was thinking about this very issue. She is a retired member of our church, an incredible, incredible woman who is both accomplished in a worldly sense and also in a Christ like sense. She has been a missionary, she has been a teacher, and she has done all kinds of extraordinary things with her life. And, at the moment, she is really enjoying her retirement and enjoying some of the things she is able to do. She feels as though it is honoring Christ, but she asked me a question. She said that she was not sure if this is the best place that she could be. That she was not sure if this is the place that God wants her to be, where where she is most meaningfully serving in His kingdom.

I thought, “Wow, that is a great question!” In fact, the question about is this where God wants me to be, is this where I have been sent, is this my purpose I think divides those who are mature in their faith from those who are just getting started. In fact, I would suggest to you that, if we never get to that question, then very often we don’t stay connected to Christ for the long haul. You see, if we only focus on what God can do for me, and how he can heal my sin or forgive me for my sins or change my behavior or if it is only about me, then ultimately my faith becomes pretty self-centered.

And the gift that was designed to direct me towards God and be Christ-centered and others-centered actually starts taking me away from Him. Sooner or later that doesn’t satisfy me anymore. I think it’s essential for us to recognize that part of being in the relationship with Christ is to be sent out by Him into the world. So what does that mean, what does that look like? How do we get sent out?

I had some friends come by the house last night. I was in a closet, basically thinking about my sermon, and my wife and some friends were out talking. I walked by a couple of times, stealing Reese’s pieces from the kitchen, because that is good sermon prep food. They asked me what I was going to talk about, and I said that I was going to tell people how they can figure out what the purpose of their life is. They said, “Well that is pretty awesome. You probably should get the word out about that really soon so more people will come.” Then I told them that, unfortunately, I was going to do that in seven parts. They told me to never mind, to not even bother.

I want to suggest to you seven things that I think help us to determine what the purpose for our life is, where God is sending us. Look, I realize a good preacher never preaches a seven-point sermon but I’m not too stressed out about that. Just go with me. Perhaps you might want to jot down a note or something that helps you remember some of what these qualities are. I think they are really helpful for us.

The first quality that I think helps us know where we are sent or what the purpose of our life is something that permeates every aspect of our life. Whatever Christ is calling you to do, whatever His purpose is for your life, it is going to be something that permeates every aspect of your life.

Notice that when God comes to Moses, he doesn't say to Moses, "I want you to do this particular thing on Sabbath. Moses, I want you to change your relationship with your wife. Moses, I want" He gives Moses a call that affects his whole life. "I want you to go and assemble the elders of Israel and say to them, 'The Lord, the God of your ancestors, the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, has appeared to me.' I want you to be my spokesperson to your people and to the very king of Egypt, the most powerful person in your world. I want you to go out, and this new mission is going to shape your whole life. You are going to leave everything else behind and take on something new."

Now, that doesn't mean for us that every time that we are sent out by God we leave behind every aspect of our life. But it does mean that every aspect of our life has to fit into our calling from God. That whatever it is that He calls you to do is going to affect, not just your Sunday or your Saturday or your time at home or your time at work, but, everything. Everything in your life is going to be connected to the calling, the sending of Christ in your life.

The second quality of what it means to be sent by Christ is that you are going to have a calling that you would not have chosen if Jesus was not in your life. What God calls Moses to do is never something Moses would have chosen for himself. Remember Moses' response when God says go? He says, "Who am I that I should go to Pharaoh? You don't know, God, I am a murderer, I was an oppressor, I am now a poor shepherd. Who am I to go and speak on your behalf?" it was not something that Moses would have picked for himself.

The same thing is true for us. Whatever Christ calls you to do, whatever He is sending you to do in the world, is going to be something that you only do because of your relationship with Him and not something you would have chosen on your own. What that means is your purpose in this life is not to be a good mother. Your purpose is not to be a good father. Your purpose is not to be a good spouse or a good friend.

These are all things that you probably would have chosen if Christ was not in your life. Yes, part of your purpose might be to raise your children to become fully committed disciples of Jesus Christ. But that is a totally different thing than being a good mother. Do you see the distinction? The calling of Christ is going to be something that is new, something that you would only come to because He calls you.

The first quality is that it will permeate every aspect of our life. The second is that it is something that we would not do without Christ. The third quality is that it is going to be something that is rooted in your weaknesses and not in your strengths. Something that is rooted in your weaknesses, and not in your strengths.

If you look in your Bible you will see that when Moses starts making his excuses to God, Yahweh, he starts calling him Lord. Did you notice that? All the letters in Lord aren't capitalized when he is making excuses. This is kind of interesting to me. He doesn't want to call God by name when he is saying, "Don't send me." Moses says, "Oh my Lord, I have never been eloquent. Neither in the past nor even now that you have spoken to your servant. But I am slow of speech and slow of tongue."

That strikes me as hugely significant because we make a big deal in our world today about the spiritual gifts that we have been given. And very often I hear people say, "Oh yeah, well, I love to do that but that is not really my gift." That's not something that I'm good at so I don't think that God has called me to do that. I would suggest to you

that the exact opposite is true. That if you are not good at something, it suggests that that might be something that God is calling you to do. That God always chooses to work from our weakness and not from our strength. We see that throughout Scripture.

We see Moses, who is a murderer and an exile and a terrible public speaker, who is going to go speak on God's behalf to the most powerful man in his world. We see the story of Paul, a man who began his tenure in the time of Jesus, by trying to kill Christians and eliminate the faith and who becomes the greatest expander of the faith in our history.

We see stories like these: we see the story of Gideon in the Old Testament. He is a judge during the period before the kings. The people are being oppressed by the Midianites, and Gideon raises up an army. And God says, "Wait a minute, your army is too big. Your army is so big, in fact, that people might say after the battle, "You won, not because the Lord gave you victory, but because your army was so big." So, He reduces the army by two thirds, and then says that it is still too big. He gets the army all the way down to 300 people and, finally He says, "Now I have somebody I can work with. Now you are so weak that there is no way anyone would say that you gained victory except through my power."

That is what Paul says in his life. "I want to boast about my weaknesses because when I am weak then I am strong because God's grace is sufficient for me." What is the area of your life where you are weak and how might that shape the calling of God in your life?

The fourth quality of how we know what our purpose is or what God is calling us to do is that it is always going to be something that brings glory to God and not ourselves. Notice that as Moses is given these unbelievable gifts such as the ability to change his staff into a serpent. He can turn water into blood which he does with the whole Nile River. He is given all these gifts, but he is given them for

a purpose. God says it is “so that they may believe that the Lord, the God of their ancestors, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, the God of Jacob has appeared to you.” You see, we get extraordinary gifts from God. We get unbelievable privileges through the Holy Spirit. But we get those not for our glory but that God might be glorified through them. And so the fourth quality of your purpose in your life is that it is always going to point away from you and towards Christ.

The fifth quality of what might determine your purpose or where Christ is sending you is that it is always something that produces conflict with the world and the evil one. Wherever you are sent it, is always going to produce conflict with the world and the evil one. We see that in both of our passages this morning.

Notice that the LORD, Yahweh, speaks to Moses. He says, “I know, however, that the king of Egypt will not let you go unless compelled by a mighty hand. So, I will stretch out my hand and strike Egypt with all my wonders.” Notice as well that Jesus in His prayer says, “The world has hated them because they do not belong to the world just as I do not belong to the world. I am not asking you to take them out of the world but I ask you to protect them from the evil one.” The reality is that whatever we are called to do, if it is truly from Christ it is going to produce some kind of conflict in the world.

A couple months ago, Jim Wood had a wonderful illustration about John Wesley. He shared that John Wesley would send out his circuit riders to preach and to share the Gospel, and when they would return, he would always ask them two questions. The first question was, “As you preached, was anyone converted? Did anyone accept Jesus Christ as their Savior?” And if they said, “Yes,” then he would ask the second question. “As you preached did anyone get angry?” And he said if they didn’t answer yes to both of those questions, then they had no future with him. The preaching of the Gospel will always produce both transformation and also resistance from a world

that does not want to be transformed. So, whatever Christ calls you to do is going to be something that produces, in some sense, some conflict with the world and the evil one.

The sixth quality is that it is always going to be something that requires your faith to conquer your fear. It is always going to be something that requires your faith to conquer your fear. And this passage in Exodus is so amazing for me because we get to see Moses, the man of God, the man in the Old Testament, who knows God probably more intimately than any other person. We get to see him absolutely terrified. So much so that he says to God, the burning bush, the LORD, the God of his fathers, "I don't want to do this. Please send somebody else." The reality is that whatever Christ calls you to do, at some point you will have to choose your faith over your fear.

Now that may be something extreme as being sent into Pharaohs' land where they have a death sentence for crimes that you know you have committed and deserved. It may be as simple as speaking in front of people when you are terrified of speaking. But whatever Christ calls you to do, it is going to be something that requires you to place your faith over your fear, something that requires you to trust in Him.

And the last thing that shapes our understanding of what we are called to do is that we'll never be sent alone. Whatever you are called to do, you'll always go with someone. And I love God's answer to Moses. Moses says, "Hey God, you have given me the opportunity of a lifetime to be your spokesperson, to do these unbelievable miracles, to go out in Egypt and be the most influential person to save my people from slavery. But I'd really rather not. That sounds kind of scary and I'd rather just stay here and be a shepherd." God doesn't strike Moses down and say, "You ungrateful wretch! I'll find somebody else."

Moses says for God to please send somebody else and God tells him, "Okay. I'll send somebody else. You are still going to go, incidentally, but I'll send somebody else. What about Aaron? Take Aaron with you." Every time in Scripture that God sends someone He always sends them in community. Whether that is the disciples of Jesus sends out by twos, or whether that is Moses and Aaron, or whether it is Joshua and Caleb, God always sends people in community.

Elisha, as he is fighting against the prophets of Baal, is convinced that no one else is left who is still faithful. God says, "No, there are still seven thousand who haven't bent the knee to Baal." And then He says, "Go and find Elisha and make him your disciple and raise him up. Minister together with him."

We are always called to be in ministry together, and so whatever your purpose is, it is going to be something that you share with Christian brothers and sisters. And it is also going to be something that you are going to share with God. He will always be with you. The promise of the Holy Spirit is that we are never left alone. In everything that we do, He is with us.

So, these seven qualities, I think, help us think about what we are sent to do, what our purpose is in this life. It is going to be something that permeates every aspect of our being. It is going to be something that we would not have chosen without Christ in our life. It is going to be something that is rooted in our weaknesses not in our strengths. It is going to be something that is about God's glory and not our own. It is going to be something that draws us into conflict with the world and the evil one. It is going to be something that requires us to choose faith over fear. It is going to be something that we do in community. We are never going to be called alone.

Here is the key: that is not an exhaustive list of everything that God calls you to do. But I do think it is a good set of tools to assess where

you are being sent. Now you have to use all those tools together. If you would pick just one, you could be in trouble. If I chose the conflict with the world as my only guiding principle, I could create a lot of good conflict by getting a placard and a megaphone and go stand on the street corner and yell at people as they go by. I'm not sure that is what Christ is calling me to do. We've got to use these together, and together they can give you a sense, perhaps, of what it means to be sent out by Christ.

I think this is a process that we only understand through prayer. That is why prayer and especially praying for the world is so critical for us. If we want to know where Christ is sending us, we have to be in prayer for His whole world. Jesus says, "I send them into the world just like I was sent into the world." So, we've got to be lifting up the whole world and asking Christ, "Where *are you* calling me to go? Now that I've been sanctified, now that I've received the gift of the Holy Spirit, what is next for me?"

There is a woman that I've been reading a lot about recently. She died about three years ago in 2008. Her name was Irena Sendler. In 2008, she was 98 years old. She lived through the Nazi occupation of Europe. She was a Polish Catholic, and when the Germans invaded Poland during World War II, she began to see what was happening to the Jewish people in her city. She lived in Warsaw. She began to see how the Jewish people were herded into the ghetto there. She saw the unbelievable living conditions that they were under and the thousands of people who were dying on a regular basis in the ghetto from starvation and disease.

Irena Sendler became connected to the underground resistance movement, the Żegota movement. She and some of her friends began to get permission from the German occupiers to go into the ghetto as a sanitation crew and work after an outbreak of typhus.

While Sendler was there, she began to talk to families and to ask the parents of Jewish children to give their children to her so that she could take them out of the ghetto. She and her friends began to take children secretly out of the ghetto even though that was at risk to their own life. They carried children out in ambulances, in trams. They carried children out in body bags and boxes and in food stuffs. There was even a mechanic who carried an infant out in a tool box at one point. Every way they could get children out of the ghetto, they carried them out. By the end of that time, they rescued about 2,500 children from the Warsaw ghetto which is extraordinary. Sendler found homes for all those children by going to both Polish families and sisters in the Catholic order to ask them if they would take these children. "And," she said, "not once that whole time did anyone ever turn me down. Even though taking in one of those children and being caught meant a death sentence."

In 1943, Sendler was found out by the Nazis who also found out that she had been taking copious notes on every child. She included the families the children were from and the places that those children were placed. The Nazis wanted those notes which she had buried in a jar in a neighbor's yard. And so they tortured her and broke both her feet and both her legs. They left her unable to walk for the rest of her life. But, since she refused to give any information to them, they finally sentenced her to death.

Just before she was to be executed, a member of the underground managed to bribe a guard and free her. She spent the next couple of years officially executed even though she was safe. After the war was over and the Soviets had come and liberated Poland, she began to look for the families of those children whom she had rescued and to try to reunite the children with the families. Almost without exception, all of those parents had been executed during the Final Solution.

Irena found homes for those children, permanent homes where they would live their lives. She found homes for all 2,500 of those kids she rescued from death in that ghetto. In 2007, the year before she died, Sendler was honored by the Polish Senate. She was unable to get that award because she was so ill. She couldn't leave her nursing home, but she sent a letter and the letter went from by a woman Elzbieta Ficowska who was one of those children whom she had rescued. In the letter she said, "Every child saved with my help is the justification of my existence on this earth and not a title for glory." "Every child saved by my help is the justification of my existence on this earth and not a title for glory."

I think we actually have a picture of Irena Sendler in a chair surrounded by children whom she rescued from the ghetto who now have a life because of her. I think, "God, that is what I want for my life. That is what I want, I want to be able to look back on my life and say, 'Yeah, I justified my existence on this earth. I recognize where God was calling me and I went when I was called. The Holy Spirit who has sanctified me has given me the privilege of looking back and saying I did something for Christ, not for my glory, not so that I could get the attention, but for Christ, and that has eternal significance.'"

And so my question for you, this morning, is really simple. Where is Christ calling you? Where are you called to go out, to be trusting in the Spirit within you, and to share the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Where are you called to go, and what does it mean for you to be sent as His ambassadors to the world? My prayer for you and my hope is that you might find, as Sendler did, something in your life that you can look back on and say, "That is why I was here. That was my purpose, I found it; I lived it. I honored Christ in the midst of it." If you can do that, I believe that *you* will transform this world in extraordinary ways for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. May it be so. In the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.