

# I AM SENDING YOU

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This is Pentecost Sunday. The significance of that is this: God is doing something powerful in our day! He is real. He is alive. And He is not done yet! He is still speaking, and He is still acting.

The God who reveals Himself to us in the Bible is triune. He is a trinity. That means He is one being, and three persons. One essence, three faces. At the same time. God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. Distinctly three, uniquely one.

Most people get along fine with the notion of the Father and the Son—probably because sons and fathers are familiar human figures to us. But the Holy Spirit is someone different!

People have been defining and redefining and arguing about the Holy Spirit for generations. Some simply prefer not to think about Him at all.

Yet, He is like the air we breathe—necessary to life, and freely available. The thing is, most people don't have to think much about breathing. It is automatic, involuntary, unconscious. Not so the Holy Spirit, because He is a real person—with thoughts and feelings and intentions of His own.

We can relate with Him, or just ignore Him. Our choice. But consider this: the Holy Spirit is God our Father's *choice gift* for us!

*Acts 1:4* *Once when he was eating with them, [Jesus] commanded them, "Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised, as I told you before. <sup>5</sup>John baptized with water, but in just a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."*

The Father's choice gift! Long promised and long awaited.

"Don't go anywhere, don't try to achieve anything," said Jesus, "until you receive the Gift." You *need* this gift.

The Holy Spirit provided the wisdom, strength, and courage that turned ordinary men and women into extraordinary servants of God.

Abraham. Joseph. Moses. Joshua. Gideon. Samson. David. The prophets. The apostles. The list is nearly endless!

Over half a billion people on the planet today call themselves Pentecostal Christians. Spirit-filled, divinely empowered Christians. Are you one of them? If not, why not? What are you waiting for? You should be waiting for the Father's promised gift!

Moses prayed, "God, if Your presence does not go with us, we will not go." Where do we think we're going without the manifest presence of the Lord?

### **Fear Locks the Doors**

On the first day of the week, just three days after Jesus was severely beaten and executed on a cross, His disciples found His tomb empty. The women said they had seen angels, who said He was alive. Mary Magdalene said she saw the Lord alive and spoke with Him. Two other disciples said they had talked with Him on their journey to Emmaus.

But there was still a lot of doubt, a lot of confusion, a lot of skepticism. After all, who had ever risen from the dead before, except those Jesus had touched or spoken to? They had seen the living raise the dead, but they had never heard of the dead arising spontaneously by their own power. They were indeed doubtful.

But here's the text:

*John 20:19 That Sunday evening the disciples were meeting behind locked doors because they were afraid of the Jewish leaders. Suddenly, Jesus was standing there among them! "Peace be with you," He said.*

They were not only doubtful; they were terrified. They had seen their Teacher arrested without cause and condemned to die. His body was broken with whips, His hands and feet nailed to a wooden cross under the midday sun, His side pierced by a Roman spear. All because He confessed that He was the Son of God.

They, too, had confessed that He was the Son of God. Would they, too, be hunted down? Would they suffer a similar fate? They locked themselves inside.

You may be afraid for your life today. Not in exactly the same way, but you may fear what will become of you. You may feel trapped by your circumstances. Your body may be failing. Your mind may be tormented. You may feel like the world is against you. You may feel hunted by others, persecuted for your faith. You may want to hide away, and lock yourself in.

Well, if that's you, Jesus understands your position. Compassionately.

## Unlocking From the Inside

Suddenly, He was standing in their midst, inside that locked room, in the midst of their fear and uncertainty. Jesus was there! With them.

And He knew what they needed: *“Peace be with you.”*

They were stunned, confused—wanting to believe what seemed utterly impossible—not knowing how to react.

*John 20:20 As He spoke, He showed them the wounds in His hands and His side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord!*

His scars remained—everlasting evidence of the price He had paid for our salvation. He gave His lifeblood to save our souls. They saw, and they believed, and they rejoiced. Crazy joy! Giddy amazement! He’s alive! He did it! He really did it! WOW!

Yet, in their excitement... PEACE. It began to fill them—satisfying their hunger, settling their uncertainty, comforting their grief, encouraging their hope, strengthening their hearts. He was with them again. Now, they could go on.

*John 20:21 Again He said, “Peace be with you. As the Father has sent Me, so I am sending you.”*

This is a deep and powerful statement, which we discussed at some length last Tuesday evening. *“Just as the Father has sent Me...”*

How did the Father send His Son?

- At the right time
- For the right objective
- With the right equipment
- By the right means

### At the Right Time

*Galatians 4:4 But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth his Son, born of woman, born under the law, <sup>5</sup> to redeem those who were under the law, so that we might receive adoption as sons. (ESV)*

Or, as the Amplified Bible has it: *“when the proper time had fully come.”*

The number of our days is in the hand of God. As the wise man of ancient times put it, *“For everything there is a season, a time for every activity under heaven”* (Ecclesiastes 3:1).

That’s why Jesus said, *“Do not leave Jerusalem until the Father sends you the gift He promised.”* There was a set time on God’s calendar for the outpouring of the Spirit. When God has set the time, there’s nothing you can do to speed it up, you just have to wait for it. Don’t leave home without it!

There happened to be something special about the Day of Pentecost. The Jews celebrated that day as a memorial to the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai. God hand wrote the Ten Commandments on tablets of stone and gave them to Moses, commencing the First Covenant of the Law. How appropriate, then, that He would begin the New Covenant of the Spirit on the anniversary of that day by pouring supernatural grace upon the followers of Jesus, causing the wondering crowd to ask, *“What does this mean?”*

Peter answered their question with a reference to the Hebrew prophecy of Joel. Paul made it even clearer for us, saying:

*Romans 7:6* *Now we can serve God, not in the old way of obeying the letter of the law, but in the new way of living in the Spirit.*

*2 Corinthians 3:6* *For the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.*

How did the Father send His Son? It had to do with the right timing! God is never too early, and He’s never too late. Isaiah exclaimed:

*Isaiah 64:4* *For since the world began, no ear has heard and no eye has seen a God like you, who works for those who wait for Him!*

Do you know Him today? If you do, wait for Him. Just as the Father sent His Son in the fullness of time, He will do the same for you. Trust Him.

### **For the Right Objective**

The purpose for which the Father sent the Son has been made clear. When Pilate, the Roman governor of Jerusalem, interviewed Jesus, the Lord said, *“You say I am a king. Actually, I was born and came into the world to testify to the truth. All who love the truth recognize that what I say is true”* (John 18:37).

The first aim for which the Son was sent was to affirm the truth—God’s truth, God’s design, God’s purpose. This He did through His many references to the Scriptures and His many teachings about the Kingdom of God.

Do you know what is truth? Can you discern the “God’s truth” from a lie? You can if you become familiar with the Scriptures which Jesus affirmed. But if you won’t love God’s words more than your necessary food, if you won’t savor them like honey, if you won’t let them transform and shape your lifestyle—then you will be confused, at best, or at worst, deceived.

Let your worldly teachers and professors instruct you about what is, for they understand what their senses tell them... but let God’s Word instruct you about what was, for He was there when He made it, and let the Scriptures instruct you about what is to come, for God has been to the future also. (If you have any doubt about what I just said, read through Psalm 119 and discover how pragmatically the words of the Lord can benefit your life.)

If you do this, if you honor and love His commands, and meditate on His counsel, you may stand tall before any person and overcome any trial, and you may testify to others about the truth that sets us free.

Of course, the objective for which the Father sent the Son was more than academic; it was not merely about *knowing* the truth, but about *living* the truth in a way that will impact the lives of others.

*Luke 19:10 For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.*

This was Jesus’ lifelong aim. And just as the Father sent Him to seek and to save the lost, Jesus now sends you.

You cannot seek them if you avoid them. You cannot save them if you shun them.

They walk in darkness and emptiness. You bring light and fullness in Jesus’ name! Your faith is contagious, if you will only expose others to it. Not just to your ideas about faith, but to your faith-in-action—whether in good times or bad.

As Andrae Crouch sang:

*I thank God for the mountains,  
and I thank Him for the valleys,  
I thank Him for the storms He brought me through.  
For if I'd never had a problem,  
I wouldn't know God could solve them,  
I'd never know what faith in God could do.*

Don’t just tell them, but *show* people what your faith in God will do. It’s the objective for which the Father sent the Son, and now it’s what the Son has sent you to do.

If you can't see the goal, you won't know in which direction to run. But if you lack the proper equipment, you likely will never reach the goal, even if you try.

## **With the Right Equipment**

*John 20:22* Then He breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit."

Why do you think Jesus told His disciples, "Don't leave town without Him"? Because, of all the things you might accumulate on your Christian journey—teachers, knowledge, mentors, understanding, opportunities, experience, skills, and friends—they will add up to NOTHING that lasts, if you do not "receive the Holy Spirit."

You simply cannot achieve what God has set before you by your own wit and strength. Jesus said, "Apart from Me you can do nothing" (John 15:5), because without His Spirit, your faith, and then you yourself will wither and fall.

When the Father sent the Son, He gave Jesus the Spirit "without limit" (John 3:34). How can you expect to prevail with just a wisp or a smattering of His energy?

In the beginning, God formed the first man, Adam, out of the dust of the ground. Then, He breathed into his nostrils the "breath of life" and Adam became a "living person" (Genesis 2:7). That is how Life (everlasting life) happens!

That's why Jesus emphatically said:

*John 3:6* Humans can reproduce only human life, but the Holy Spirit gives birth to spiritual life. <sup>7</sup> So don't be surprised when I say, 'You must be born again.' (Or, "born from above," "born of the Spirit.")

Jesus needed to be equipped with the Holy Spirit for His mission. Your mission in life requires the same. You're on a mission for God, and you need God's power to get it done.

Just before returning to Heaven, Jesus told His disciples:

*Acts 1:8* You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth."

We need power to be effective witnesses, to live lives that impact others for Christ.

You don't need such power just to make modest changes in your lifestyle. Diligence and determination can accomplish much. But if you can't even see yourself living a different life—a

Christ-centered, Christ-honoring life—all the effort in the world will avail little. That kind of vision and conviction come from the Spirit of God.

Have you received the Holy Spirit?

### **By the Right Means**

Okay, so you're waiting on the Lord, and your objective is clear, and you're giving yourself more and more to the Spirit's control. But how do you fulfill God's plan? What will the Spirit do through you?

You see, the end does not justify the means. Proclaiming the truth with a bad attitude will not be effective. Strong-arming people into church—emotionally or physically—will not win their hearts.

The right timing, the right objective, and the right equipment still cannot guarantee success. You must use the right means to achieve God's purpose.

The Law of Moses taught us to “love the Lord with all our hearts, and to love our neighbors as ourselves” (Luke 10:25-28). On those two commands hung all the Law and the Prophets of the Old Testament.

Of all the teachings that Jesus gave, only one did He define as “My commandment.” It was this:

*John 15:12 This is my commandment: Love each other in the same way I have loved you. <sup>13</sup> There is no greater love than to lay down one's life for one's friends. <sup>14</sup> You are my friends if you do what I command.*

“Just as” the Father loved the Son. “Just as” the Son has loved you. That's how we're to do it! With love! His love.

And how are we to love others? Just as we have been loved by Christ. Without condemnation. With understanding and grace. With firmness and truth. But most of all, with forgiveness.

Is there anything more characteristic of Christ's love for us than the fact that He has forgiven all our sins? This is so true that some people think that forgiveness is the equivalent of salvation, when, in fact, it is but one aspect of this great salvation. But it is a primary aspect of it; it is the first wave that we encounter. We have been forgiven—without deserving it, without earning it.

And now Jesus says to us:

*John 20:23 "If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

This is not the only way, but this is the primary way in which we may express the love of Jesus Christ: forgiving others. Just think of how many ways He said this to us.

First, He taught us to pray: *"Forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us"* (Matthew 6:12).

Then, He warned us: *"If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins"* (Matthew 6:14-15).

When Peter asked Jesus how many times he needed to forgive someone who sins against him, Jesus answered, *"No, not seven times, but seventy times seven"* (Matthew 18:21). That's a lot!

Our prayers hinge upon this practice: *"But when you are praying, first forgive anyone you are holding a grudge against, so that your Father in heaven will forgive your sins, too"* (Mark 11:25).

How many ways can He say it? *"Do not judge others, and you will not be judged. Do not condemn others, or it will all come back against you. Forgive others, and you will be forgiven. Give, and you will receive"* (Luke 6:37-38).

Keep Christian relations sweet: *"If another believer sins, rebuke that person; then if there is repentance, forgive. Even if that person wrongs you seven times a day and each time turns again and asks forgiveness, you must forgive"* (Luke 17:3-4).

And, finally, our text again: *"If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."*

This, right after receiving the Holy Spirit. How clear is that? Do you have difficulty forgiving others freely and frequently? Of course you do. Everyone does. That's why we need the Spirit's power. Without Him we will invite judgment on ourselves.

How often, in Jesus' teaching about forgiveness, does our freedom depend on our freeing others? Phrases like *"as we have forgiven," "if you forgive," "first forgive,"* and *"then you will be forgiven"* occur repeatedly. This must be important!



Well, if forgiveness is the primary way to express the love of Jesus Christ, then it certainly is important!

Jesus was sent by the Father, for which we are all glad!

In the same way, you have been sent by Jesus. Are you making people glad of it? Are you “good news” to them?

Are you inviting and allowing the Holy Spirit to be active in your daily life—your thoughts, your words, your actions?

Do you need to get serious about forgiveness? Who do you need to forgive today? Because of the cross of Jesus Christ, it’s always the “fullness of time” to forgive others.