
The Worthy Sending of Savoring Saints

3 John 1-8

Introduction What a joy it has been over the last 5 years as an Elder at the Chapel to see people walking in the truth! We have watched as God has grown us in His Word and guided us by His providences. We have been excited to see the infusion of new people who move towards God through life together at the Chapel. We have experienced the framing and fueling effect of a Mission and Vision aiming us towards love for God and love for people.

We have watched as God has taken several of our men, given them formal training for teaching and shepherding and set in them places of ministry. We have been challenged and stretched as we thought more carefully and strategically about missions with men like Cary Cupka and Ken Ebert as the catalyst. Most of us are eagerly anticipating the grace of God for Open Arms Children's Ministry.

The sending of men and women with good news of the glory of the blessed God has been the heart of strategic ministry and mission. It began in the church at Antioch and continues even today. It is how the great commission is fulfilled. It is how God calls His people to Himself. The going of God-besotted men and women to announce to all the people groups that God is supreme and sovereign and saving and satisfying thrills our souls.

At the core of this going is the good news of the doing and dying and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It proclaims the truth of the gospel and announces that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. It sends men and women whose hearts and lives are living models of sacrificial Kingdom seeking. It requires, in the face of the suffering involved, an all-encompassing vision of the glory of God.

The point of ministry is to speak the truth in love, to proclaim the gospel, to make disciples by Bible intensive teaching. As we turn to our text, notice how John, the Apostle, makes truth the center of circle of loving and living.

- Loving in truth (v.1) - The power of John's love for Gaius is in truth. His is a love for Gaius that encompasses truth in all that it can mean in their relationship. It is truth that shapes sincerity and genuineness and real, life-changing discipleship. Real love then is in the sphere of truth in God's Word that leads us to truth about and with one another.
- Walking in truth (v.3-4) - The purity of Gaius' living is in his walking in truth. John loves in truth those who live in truth. It brings him no greater joy. His gladness in God is fueled by the visible evidence of God's grace in believers.

So here it is: *truth must shape our loving and our living*. And when it does, it takes on a certain look and feel and taste when it comes to strategic efforts in ministry.

This motivates John to pray for Gaius in a very interesting way. Verse 2 tells us that Gaius prays that God would make him as strong and healthy physically as he is spiritually. Now does this mean that God is primarily interested in your health and wealth? No. But it does mean that God has purposed to use men and women who love and live in truth to be significantly used in His Kingdom. So what is that for Gaius? And what might it be for us as well?

The Biblical Trajectory

The Strategic Practice

What does faithfulness in walking in truth look like in relation to ministry?

The situation referred to here in verse 5 is what we think of as modern missions. These were men who out preaching the Word, establishing or encouraging churches. Often they traveled with very little regular support. So they were dependent on the support and sustenance of believers wherever they went.

Though we tend to do more with a formal approach to gathering support and identifying men and women we support, the underlying principle is the same. There are people go forth and the rest are called support those who go forth.

Gaius (and probably the whole church he is gathered with) is commended for being faithful in what was being done for these people. This faithful service to Christ is being done on behalf of men and women they don't even know. They are strangers. They were not necessarily people from their own congregations. But they recognized what part they could have in the spread of the gospel.

Through the lens of this text we get to see the strategic practice of the New Testament. I want to try to capture that in three important words that we have waved over missions, over strategic efforts in ministry.

Sending

(v.6)

We have a responsibility *to send people out as a partnership*. We must not confuse the simplicity of what is going on here with the complexity we have. Believers were taking these people into their homes and churches, taking care of them and sending them on their way. Obviously, we do much more than this when send missionaries, care for guest speakers and strategically plan for ministry.

The point here is that they made their on-going ministry possible. They were sending people on to the destination of God's purpose. We find this sort of language all through the New Testament. In Acts 15:3, Paul and Barnabas were "sent on their way by the church." In Acts 20:38 and 21:5, the word is used in the sense of escorting or accompanying. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he planned to come to them and possibly even winter with them and then they could send him on his way (1 Corinthians 16:6) just as he expected them to send Timothy (v.11). In 2 Corinthians 1:16, he reiterates this idea. Listen to Titus 3:13, "Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. And let our people also learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful." In 2 Corinthians 8:14-9:6, a ministry team is sent around to the churches to collect and carry the offering up to Jerusalem. The ministry team around Paul is dispatched at different times to different places for different tasks. Some of these were short term; others for longer periods (Ephesians 6:21b-22; Colossians 4:7-17; Philipians 2:25-30; 1 Thessalonians 3:1-7).

Acts 11:23-26 is particularly significant as God's work was planted and began to grow in Antioch. Barnabas is sent to see what is happening there, recognizes the grace of God calling sinners and the very great need for all these new converts to be taught. He goes to Tarsus, gets Paul to come with him to Antioch. Paul and Barnabas

then seem to formally establish a congregation there that evangelizes the lost, edifies the believers while exalting our glorious God. By Acts 13, the leadership team is well in place, serving with great energy and effectiveness. Then, for the sake of the gospel, two of the best are selected and sent to do elsewhere what had happened at Antioch. The language all through here is that of sacrificial sending for the evangelism of the lost and the establishment of the believers.

Savoring

(v.7)

Now, our next word. 3 John 7 gives us the reason we are send these people out. The verse begins with the word, "for". There is something that marks them as the kind of people we ought to be sending. What is that?

They are the kind of people who have gone out *for the sake of the Name*. What does this mean? What does it mean that they went out for the sake of the Name? And is this important?

First, it is important because of the way he puts this sentence together. It literally reads, "For on behalf of that Name they went out." Further, the word translated *for the sake of* is actually the first word in the sentence. So it is like he has bold italic large font, getting your attention that this is significant.

But what does it mean? This is one of those phrases in the Bible that we hear all the time and probably don't think too much about it. So let me put it this way. If this marks the kind of people we ought to be sending, then what is it we are looking for? How do we know that people are going for the sake of the Name?

We are to send (and support) people who are going because of God centered reasons. They are a people whose vision of the gospel and evangelism and church planting and discipling is Godward and God centered. They love God and savor Him. It is His Name and His fame that they are going to spread. It is the good news of the glory of the blessed God that is in their hearts motivating their living and dying.

And don't pass over this too easily. After being reared on the mission field, serving in Germany and rubbing shoulders with ministry leaders from all over the world it is my sad observation that this is rarely what truly motivates them. Much that moves people out of their comfort zones to take risk for Christ often are man centered and results oriented.

Beloved, if your primary reason to go to New York or Germany or Brazil or across the street is to see people saved then I want to challenge you to focus your motivation, not on the needs of man, but on the greatness and the glory and the mercy and the wonder of the great God you are representing. Yes, those needs are great. But those kinds of needs often inspire great humanitarian efforts. There is nothing uniquely Christian about them.

But O, when you go to spread the fame and reputation of God by proclaiming the salvation of His Sovereign Son so that He is magnified and glorified, then the true needs of sinful, dying men will be met. And amazingly, in this you will find deep wells of sustaining grace to persevere no matter what the providence of God brings.

So, I encourage you to savor God. To plunge into the Word until you become enamored of the God you are representing and proclaiming.

Supporting

(v.8)

The last phrase of verse 7 makes the support of verse 8 necessary. For the missions enterprise, these men and women who savored God were sent out taking no support from, in John's words, the Gentiles. For us, they went out entirely dependent on believers.

This tells us that it is right for missionaries to be supported from believing churches. It is what we ought to do. We as a gathered people need to be engaged in the great enterprise of spreading the gospel and the glory and gladness of God throughout the world by supporting those whom God is sending. We ought to be searching out among ourselves, and listening carefully to identify people who are savoring God in such a way that we can send them and support them.

You probably noticed that I missed a phrase in verse 6. We ought to be sending people *in a manner worthy of God*. Here it is and it is very important. If we find people who are like this we need to send them and support them in a manner that corresponds to the God who is sending them and whom they savor. This means with adequate support. This means with real, time consuming, detail naming prayer. This means with emails and cards and caring. It means, particularly for those who go to remote locations, with news and "keeping in touch with the world" stuff.

Support sometimes does not mean financial support. Sometimes, people are sent who are not vocationally supported by the church. I spent 6 years as an elder/pastor in the church in Germany supporting myself by laboring with my own mind and hands (on computer keyboards mostly). The support we received was in encouragement, friendship and fellowship. In our situation, that support was much prized.

Why do we do this? Why do we bend every effort of our heart and mind and pocket book to support people in manner worthy of God? Because we are partners together with the truth. Now look at it carefully. We are, both of us, sending and sent, partners with the truth. It is a joint effort, not just between us, but with God. What a difference it makes when we see ourselves this way. People there; us here; all working together with the truth for the glory of Christ.

The Shaping Principles

So what does all this mean for us this morning? Before explaining what God has placed before us, I want capture several principles that shape the kinds of ministries that are thought of as "sending", or as we have also called it, "launching".

Ministry partnering often involves sending.

In missions this is obvious that ministry partnering often means the sending of people away to somewhere else. But from our texts this morning, we see that there is a kind of going that takes people in one place, plants them in another to serve there.

Our sending is to reflect the God we are serving.

We will send in a way that makes God look great in our lives and in the lives of those going. We will lovingly sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom. We will be sure that all we do is shaped by and for the glory of God. We will be, in our sending and supporting, a telescope that makes the supremacy of God visible to all the world.

We are to send those who are savoring God.

Listen to me. I am not talking about only sending people who believe in John Edwards or Pipers' view of Christian Hedonism. But I am saying that we must be sure that the people we launch and send are God centered and God besotted. The garments of their lives must be saturated with the perfume of the glory of God.

We are to send those who are going for the sake of God's Name.

We want to launch people whose first concern is for God and not themselves. We will seek for people who are motivated by their vision of God in His Word and by His Spirit. Yes, they will be a people who see the need of the lost and are proclaiming the gospel. But they must be a people with a huge passion for God.

We ought to support people like this who desire to go.

Some are going to say to me, "I cannot think of very many people like this." That makes sense. I can't think of many pastors like this. But we will declare this vision for ministry and encourage others to embrace and seek with prayer and wisdom for God to raise up people whom we can send and support.

Ministry partnering is a sending effort centered on Truth.

At the center of deciding who will be sent and supported will be truth. Why would we send and support someone who is not teaching the truth? Yes, we can rejoice when God sees fit to use and bless those who are faithful according to their light. But we should send and support those with whom we have a true partnership in truth.

We will affirm that truth is what ministry is all about. It is about proclaiming the truth of God's Word to lost and sinful people. We will do so expecting God to awaken and regenerate men and women so that they will respond by exercising the gift of faith. It is about teaching truth to believers so that they can grow in faith and love. It is about sending servants of the truth.

Now this means some hard decisions as we grow. This means that we will be applying a standard that few do today. But it means that those whom we send and support we will truly be fellow workers in the truth for the glory of Christ.

The Energizing Perspectives

God has given us an opportunity at what appears to our human senses at all the wrong time. In that providence though has come two a clear and energizing perspectives that help us to see all this through God's eyes.

Give away to increase

The Bible has a profoundness rooted in paradoxes. A.W. Tozer's article on "That Incredible Christian" has captured this for us. The way up is to go down. Just when we think we are going up, we are actually going down. The way to live is to die. The way to gain is to give. This last statement has been at the heart of our appeal to you to give away so that we can gain or grow here in our place. Additionally, we are being challenged to give away people for the growth of the gospel somewhere else. What a great God we have to entrust us with both at the same time.

Sacrifice to share

The second perspective is that all of true work of ministry requires sacrifice, the giving up of what we treasure in exchange for a greater joy. Jesus endures the cross for the joy set before Him. He goes to a cross in view of the crown later. Paul is not willing to place his light momentary afflictions (which would have stopped most moderns cold) on the scale over against the eternal weight of glory. Now we must do more than give up some time, some effort, some work. We must sacrificially give away people to share them and send them for the sake of Name.

The Present Opportunity

In our Mission and Vision Statement, we have identified three key priorities in our VALUES RELATING TO CHRISTIAN MISSION. We value:

- Challenging, training, sending and supporting missionaries locally, nationally and globally who affirm our doctrinal distinctives and evangelize the lost, edify God's people or equip God's people for ministry.
- Supporting ministries who serve to support and strengthen the work of God worldwide.
- Sharing with other churches our vision and doctrine to encourage their efforts in Biblical ministry.

Out of this has been a dream among the elders from the very beginning of the Chapel, to reach a point where we could take families and plant them in a community to establish a God exalting, Bible preaching, people loving church. We were thinking long term as we grew to over 500 in being able to sustain such an effort.

But God has His own plans, mysterious as they may be at times. Let me explain.

Our Strategic Relationship

Several years ago, Dave and Cynthia Hildebrand joined in at the Chapel to learn, love and live in covenant unity with us. God grew in him a desire to deepen his ability in the Word and to move toward office bearing as an elder. The transition from a Missions Society to the Eldership took them through the Master's Seminary. We were privileged to be a part of that sending in their lives. Then, as he completed his work, we formally and publicly examined him and ordained him as an elder. After a time of seeking a church, the Elders asked Dave to consider re-locating to the Dayton-Cincinnati area, serving as an elder here, supporting himself vocationally as a fire-fighter and seeing what God would do for us and him in ministry here. As we were pondering and praying about this, he was approached by All of Grace Baptist Church in Mason to consider being their teaching pastor. We were so very happy for him while being somewhat sad for ourselves.

Around 8 weeks ago, Dave assumed the leadership of All of Grace. All of Grace is a very small congregation whose former pastor recommended they close their doors. A core group has kept the church open in hopes and prayer that God would move on their behalf. While we do not know the church itself well, we have confidence through God in Dave that he will lead and shepherd and teach them well.

Our Partnering Request

For several weeks, one of our elders has been praying with and pondering over what God has in store for his family. He has established a mission and vision statement for his family and their ministry together. Out of this mission and vision has come a joint request from him and two other families to be sent to All of Grace to serve there. This proposal was presented Tuesday evening. It has unfolded very quickly. However, we see the breathtaking intersection of lives and ministry in the providence of God. He is orchestrating all of this to meet the need of All of Grace and to challenge the Chapel at the very time we are inclined to grasp tightly the people we love and not be willing to give them away sacrificially. Here is the proposal as they have written it and as we have affirmed it.

MISSION: To glorify God in all things, to share Christ with those in our sphere of influence, and to encourage our brothers and sisters in a local church.

VISION: To carry out this mission at All of Grace Baptist Church by:

- Exalting Christ in corporate worship
- Engaging all members of our family in ministry
- Evangelizing the immediate community
- Encouraging the body in manifold ways of love
- Equipping the saints with biblical truth

BACKGROUND: We have come to this decision based on the following:

- We believe that evangelizing our community is a crucial facet of our walk with God.
- We have struggled to bring acquaintances to church because of the distance we travel.
- Dave Hildebrand, former members of The Chapel, recently took a position at All of Grace.
- All of Grace, solidly grounded in Scripture, has struggled for years with diminishing numbers.
- The Hildebrands have prayed for God to send mature Christian men to All of Grace.

GUIDING PRINCIPLES: we approach this ministry opportunity:

- With a passion for the Word of God
- With an obedient submission to the Elders at The Chapel
- With a deep love for the saints at The Chapel
- As fellow laborers sent from The Chapel
- As workers received by All of Grace for the work of ministry
- As covenant keepers together to the Lord

COVENANTS: We make the following covenants in light of this ministry opportunity:

- *To each other:* to live our mission of sharing Christ with those in our sphere of influence, and to hold one another accountable for our walk with the Lord.
- *To The Chapel:* to persevere by faith in this work to which He has led us.
- *To All of Grace:* to serve in whatever way is needed with gladness.

CONSIDERATIONS: We are mindful of the following considerations as we pursue this ministry opportunity:

- To make it an encouragement to both the sender (The Chapel) and the receiver (All of Grace)
- To demonstrate a humble and meek spirit toward both the sender and the receiver
- To demonstrate a genuine love for the saints of both the sender and the receiver
- To clearly articulate our vision to both the sender and the receiver
- To maintain the momentum of the Building Project at The Chapel
- To ensure a smooth transition of our ministry responsibilities

Our Sending Response

Therefore, It is with mingled grief and gladness, with trust in the wise providences of God, with confidence that His sustaining grace is at work in both the Chapel and All of Grace, that the Elders of Clearcreek Chapel send to All of Grace, at their mutual request, the ministry team of Michael and Jennifer McDonald, Scott and Joy Bennett, and Todd and Amy Warrix. We do so to fulfill their every resolve for good, and their work of faith by God's power, so that the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in them, they in Him, according to the grace of our God and the Lord Jesus Christ (2 Thess. 1:11-12).

Further, the Elders of Clearcreek Chapel commend Pastor Michael McDonald to All of Grace as a pastor/elder who is being sent from us to them for God.

Some will question the wisdom of sending three key families in ministry here to another church right at the nexus of planning a facility expansion. We understand that this has unfolded in a very brief time. Further, it seems like a very bad time to be doing this. However, we believe God is in this. We as Elders have been challenged and stretched as we wrestled with this on Tuesday evening. The need is great. The mission is clear. The people are qualified. Their hearts are yearning to serve. They are committed to submit to the decisions of the Elders. What better savoring people to send and give our whole hearted support to?

In Acts 13, the church at Antioch was challenged the very same way. Here are your two best ministry leaders: Barnabas and Paul. Send them for the sake of the Name. I am sure that the launch of Paul and Barnabas affected ministry there and then. And yes, we wish it were at a better time for us. But, due to our own ministry planning, we could not wait.

We needed to announce now. Pastor Ken will continue to shepherd south flock. Nursery and women's ministry, music and Christian Ed will continue to grow and advance.

And this is hard for us. We wish they were not quite so loved. We wish they were not quite so deeply involved in ministry. We wish they were not quite so well trained. We wish they were not desirous to go. But if they were not, we would not send them.

And so, they will go. I know many of you are shocked and stunned. So we call on you to support them – not by giving them money but by sharing your deep love for them in tears, tears of sadness in leaving and tears of joy in launching. This, my beloved is not a leaving, but a launching.

The Partners Presentation

We want to conclude this morning with a Letter from the Team, a Letter from the Chapel to All of Grace and a prayer of dedication.

Letter from the Team

Michael McDonald

Letter from the Church

Pastor Ed McNeese

Prayer of Dedication

Pastor Dan Turner, Pastor Dale Evans

I close with this charge to these three families from 2 Thessalonians 2:13-3:5 [ESV].

We ought always to give thanks to God for you, brothers beloved by the Lord, because God chose you as the firstfruits to be saved, through sanctification by the Spirit and belief in the truth. To this he called you through our gospel, so that you may obtain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. So then, brothers, stand firm and hold to the traditions that you were taught by us, either by our spoken word or by our letter.

Now may our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God our Father, who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace, comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word.

Finally, brothers, pray for us, that the word of the Lord may speed ahead and be honored, as happened among you, and that we may be delivered from wicked and evil men. For not all have faith. But the Lord is faithful. He will establish you and guard you against the evil one. And we have confidence in the Lord about you, that you are doing and will do the things that we command. May the Lord direct your hearts to the love of God and to the steadfastness of Christ.

Amen

