

Sunday, August 25, 2019 – “The Results Are In!” Series III
“Sent to Disciple”

John 17: 20-26

Rev. Derek S. Klemm, Mountain View Lutheran Church, Las Vegas, NV
Relational Structure

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

First, a quick recap and running start on this third and final week of a sermon series unveiling our new vision statement as a congregation – our new vision statement has a clause that says who we are: **“We are God’s chosen people, adopted in baptism, forgiven through His Gifts”** and we saw God calls us chosen, adopted, forgiven through His Gifts of Word and Sacrament. That new reality defines us and empowers us, with God’s help to live out His purpose for us: **“sent on His mission to love and disciple others.”** Last week we examined what it is to be sent on God’s mission to love – to love each other and to love even those who hate or persecute us, remembering the whole of the Scriptures are about love. The life we’re called to live sends us out in God’s mission of truth, love for each other and love for those who don’t know Jesus yet, and all those stay in tension. There’s a delicate dance in which we never sacrifice God’s truth *and* we never sacrifice love – for each other or even for those who stand against us – as we love our neighbor as ourselves.

While love for love’s sake is a worthy mission (after all, the Ten Commandments themselves are all founded in God desire and will for us – that He created us to live Him and other humans) His mission also includes making **disciples**. This came through clearly in your feedback from our event back in April and again is consistent with God’s Word.

Disciple is one of those words that conjures up images of a band of twelve men following Jesus around. Robes, sandals beards. Those are the disciples that are supposed to be keeping watch while Jesus prays the words in our Gospel lesson from John 17 today. Earlier that night Jesus and His disciples moved from that Upper Room to the Mount of Olives and now to Gethsemane. After a large meal, full bellies, and a fair amount of wine – that’s what happens at the Passover dinner the stage is set. Disciples are falling asleep, Judas is leading soldiers to the garden, and Jesus is praying. You probably know what happens next. But before we get to Peter cutting off ears, Caiaphas and the kangaroo court, Pilate, Herod and Pilate again, the soldiers’ flogging, the crown of thorns, Simon of Cyrene joining Jesus on the death march and

John, Mary the mother of Jesus and Mary Magdalene watching the nails and the cross and the dying, there's another character we need to meet. It's here in this text, during the prayer. No matter how well you do or don't know the story of Jesus' arrest and crucifixion, I guarantee this character in the story is the one you know best of all.

It's you. You're in this story. Jesus prays, first for His disciples – robes, sandals, beards and nodding off while He prays but not for them alone – then He explicitly prays explicitly for you and me. He prays that we, who would later believe in Him through the Word of disciples... like John, who wrote this text today – that we would be one with each other and thus one with Jesus and the Father, so the whole world would know that Jesus is God's Son.

All of which makes a great starting point for knowing what it is to be a disciple – a disciple is one with their Master. The Master's teaching, priorities, their very life is of utmost concern to a disciple. Disciples follow where their Master goes. That's part of what makes the scattering and abandoning of Jesus' first twelve disciples so bad. These disciples were not being who Jesus had formed them into being.

Just like with love, formation by Jesus happens through what Jesus does for us. We're formed by God's Word. Chosen, adopted, forgiven and made into something new through this Word, baptism, communion and "I forgive you all your sins" talk frees us to start living as one, the way Jesus forms us and calls us to be. That formation by God frees us to love and it also frees us help fellow disciples of Jesus and make more.

For us gathered here today it starts at home. Generations that followed those first twelve disciples believed in Jesus through their message. Parents, grandparents, godparents, aunts, uncles – Jesus' prayer is lived out as our own little ones see us as being at one with Jesus. The example of God's Word forming us as we study it, as we teach our kids to pray and pray with our family, as we prioritize worship and being around God's Word, as we consistently live it out in our priorities – that speaks something, especially to our older kids watching closely for consistency, signs of hypocrisy or divergence from what Jesus says and who God says that we are. Our whole lives speak on being one with Christ – or not. It's a high calling, a hard task, one none do perfectly, which is where forgiveness comes in – and how much more so when we openly accept responsibility with our family for our own errors and failing and in so doing point

clearly to Jesus. . Parents – especially dads – listen up – your kids are watching you. They'll be your disciples – is that following founded in Jesus or in some other priority?

Forming disciples has an intentional thrust to it. Yes there's consistency and example involved but we're engaged in disciplines. Time in God's Word, letting it form us. Time in prayer. Time in community with other Christians.

That's one of the major reasons we called Pastor Brad. Worship services are the main places God does His forgiving work through His Gifts, the Word and Sacraments. So too formation is aided in conversation with other Christians around God's Word and living our lives together. Let's be honest – for all the truth we can preach here if there isn't human connection and relationship happening as God builds us up in the body of Christ, it's a lot easier for a person to drift away. My vicarage pastor had a saying that has always stuck with me – no one joins a church intending to become inactive. And yet that happens so often. Why is that? These after all are other brothers and sisters in Christ who we want to see continually formed by God's Word, shaped into the new creation God intends them to be. We want to walk together as disciples of Jesus, sent on His mission and by His power to keep making more disciples so the whole world knows Jesus!

For some of us this community forms real easily and naturally. We have a lot of teachers here. Like, A LOT. A healthy majority of them are Lutheran school teachers. Many of those teachers went to the same schools, work in the same places, overlap with many of the same friend groups – not only at Mountain View but at other churches in Vegas and even around the country, share a common theological education that undergirds their work. Social, emotional, spiritual connections with other Christians for these teachers and their families happens quite naturally and easily. That's fantastic and worth rejoicing over!

For others these connections aren't so ready-made. As we start to adopt to more of a small group model focused on helping form people in the Word, grow as disciples of Jesus while keeping an eye for God's mission to the world in focus the intention is that no one be left behind. It's unrealistic, even unhealthy to strive for Mountain View to be a place that everyone knows each other. I'm talking basic group dynamics – you get past 30 people or so and that's impossible. What we do want is that Mountain View be a place that everyone knows Jesus and

everyone is known as we do life together. As God's Word shapes us in the context of a loving community of other disciples who are one in Jesus, we pray Jesus leverages that to go out into the world the same way He does, to love and keep making more disciples for ever more people who don't yet know Him.

We pray for alignment as One and Oneness in mission with our Master Jesus, going where He goes. As Jesus prays for us we take heart – everything He asks His Father the Father will do because He loves Jesus and sent Him for this purpose. God's heart is to adopt us into His family and forgive us so He can send us on His mission to love and disciple others. And so, as our Master calls us we pray to our Father, knowing that this thing we ask in Jesus' name our Father will do. We pray with Jesus: "22 The glory that you have given me I have given to them, that they may be one even as we are one, 23 I in them and you in me, that they may become perfectly one, so that the world may know that you sent me and loved them even as you loved me."

In Jesus' name, Amen.