# SERMON SERIES:

# REDISCOVERING THE ‘GO’ IN GOSPEL

**“The ‘How’ And ‘Where’ Of Going”**

Mark 6:7-13

***Once a month in Chicago, a group of dedicated professionals venture into their community to serve those less fortunate than themselves. They’re not carrying hammers to build a house, or ladles and pots to work in a soup kitchen. Instead, they’re armed with blow-dryers, scissors, nail polish and love.***

 ***The volunteers of Hairdressers In the Marketplace--a ministry of Willow Creek Community Church--hosts monthly “Day of Beauty” sessions where women in need receive free pampering, from haircuts to manicures. But they also hear about God’s love for them. HIM also goes to homeless shelters and facilities for the mentally handicapped to provide free haircuts.***

 ***A hairstylist founded the ministry in 1998 after trying numerous volunteer positions at Willow Creek. None felt like the right fit for her skills and passions. For a while she wrestled with God: “Why did you give me a talent that’s so much about vanity?” she prayed. “How can I serve you with these skills?”***

 ***She says God answered those prayers with a vision for a group that not only communicates God’s love and care to women in need, but also reaches out to stylists themselves. “We focus on evangelism to the beauty industry, which is filled with so much darkness. Its underlying message is all about external things—glamour and glitz. I wanted to bring the light of God’s Word into our industry,” she said.***

 The volunteers of Hairdressers In the Marketplace are going out to places they normally wouldn’t frequent. They realize the people who need to hear about the love of God aren’t going to come through the doors of Willow Creek Community Church, located in an affluent suburb of Chicago, nor will they go to the salons where these professionals work. So these stylists are willing to go to them in the name of Jesus.

 Today brings us to the conclusion of our sermon series “Rediscovering The ‘Go’ In Gospel.” So far we’ve seen that God sends us to new locations and new people in order to fulfill his plan for them. It’s not primarily about those who go—although our spiritual growth is important in the process. It’s about those that God desires to reach.

 Last week we talked about why the word ‘go’ is so difficult for Christians. We said that going forces us to trust God more than we may be accustomed to doing; our heart may not be into going; and the outcomes of going will rarely be what we hope or expect.

 Let’s turn to our Scripture reading this morning, Mark 6:7-13. Two of the most common questions that arise about taking the gospel to others centers on ‘How do I go?’ and ‘Where do I go?’ Let’s take a look at these two questions.

*7-8Jesus called the Twelve to him, and sent them out in pairs. He gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition. He sent them off with these instructions: 8-9“Don’t think you need a lot of extra equipment for this.* You *are the equipment. No special appeals for funds. Keep it simple. 10“And no luxury inns. Get a modest place and be content there until you leave. 11“If you’re not welcomed, not listened to, quietly withdraw. Don’t make a scene. Shrug your shoulders and be on your way.”*

*12-13Then they were on the road. They preached with joyful urgency that life can be radically different; right and left they sent the demons packing; they brought wellness to the sick, anointing their bodies, healing their spirits.*

 First off, how do we go with the gospel? *Jesus called the Twelve to him, and sent them out in pairs.* **The first way that we go is with someone else whenever possible.** **ASK: Why do you think Jesus sent his disciples out in pairs?** [support, confidence, prayer, safety/protection, etc.] We see the same thing in Acts. Paul and Barnabas took their first missionary trip together. Later on it was Paul and Silas, while Barnabas took Mark. Going in pairs gives us confidence and support. It strengthens our resolve. It provides prayer coverage.

 ***During my years in seminary, I was part of a group that went into downtown Lexington, Kentucky, on Friday nights to build relationships with people in coffee houses, bars, laundromats, bus stops, and on the street. We went in a large group and after we parked and prayed, we’d separate into groups of two or more. If two of us went to a coffee house we’d position ourselves so we could see each other across the room. If one person struck up a conversation the other could pray.***

 **The second way we go is with Christ’s authority.** *[Jesus] gave them authority and power to deal with the evil opposition.* We don’t go in our own power, ingenuity or agenda. But we do step forward knowing that Jesus has given us the ability to share the gospel.

 Every single one of us can tell the story of Jesus. Every single one of us can tell our own story. All we have to do is invest the time in relationships. If our goal is to glorify God and share the good news, the Holy Spirit will give us opportunities to do just that.

 One of the things I’ve noticed is that Christians are often scared of going with the gospel because we think the sins of non-Christians will rub off on us. ***If your parents were like mine, they taught us “Don’t hang around with people who will give you a bad reputation. Their bad habits will rub off on you.”*** Now here’s the interesting thing: *Jesus wasn’t worried that the bad habits of others would rub off on his disciples.* Jesus counted on the good habits of his disciples rubbing off on others!

 Today’s Scripture reading occurred about a year from the time that Jesus called the Twelve to follow him. Before that, they’d spent a little over a year tagging along but weren’t formally called out as the Twelve. So after, let’s say two years of training, Jesus sent them off in groups of two.

 **ASK: How many of you have been a follower of Jesus for more than thirty years? Forty years? Fifty years?** Do you realize how much training you’ve had compared to the Twelve? You’ve had decades! So do we really believe that the bad habits of non-Christians are going to rub off on us? We forget that Jesus sends us out so that he will rub off on them!

 The other question we mentioned at the beginning is ‘Where do I go?” The simple answer is this: we go wherever the gospel is needed, wherever the Holy Spirit leads us.

 We go to coffee shops like Starbucks or Panera Bread. We go to restaurants on the same day, at the same time, to build relationships with the people who work there. We go to the flea market on the hill. We go to the baseball fields down by the lake. And yes, we even go to bars. ***When I moved here and met Kyle, the first place we ever got together was up the road at the Tavern. We met there many times. He and I have also met at Penny’s. Now our current haunts are Huddle House and Charlie’s Lounge.***

 ***Now again, I know we were all taught “You don’t go into bars! That’s where the ‘bad people’ go.” Our parents and grandparents steered us away from establishments like that.*** But Jesus hung out in places that we’re told to avoid. He dined in the home of the cheat and fraud, Zachaeus. He met a woman at a well in a Samaritan village. He attended a party at the home of Matthew the tax collector that had a lot of disreputable scoundrels on hand. Jesus wasn’t afraid to meet people on their turf, nor was he afraid to send his disciples—with only two years’ worth of training—to do the same.

I realize that many of us won’t ever go in Penny’s for a variety of reasons. Not everyone is called and sent to every single place. Maybe your place is the waiting room at the doctor’s office. Maybe it’s the checkout line at the store. Maybe it’s the pharmacy where you get your prescriptions. No matter where we are, the important thing is to keep ourselves available to the whispers and nudging of the Holy Spirit.

 The incarnation of God-in-the-flesh is our model. ***Think about how different salvation history would have been if Jesus had our attitude about going:*** ***“Sorry Dad, I don’t want to go to* those *people. I don’t want to be seen with them. They hang out in all the wrong places. They say all the wrong things. They’ll take advantage of my attempts to help them.”*** Kinda silly, I know--and yet that’s the attitude many Christians have toward the lost. There would be no salvation history—no atonement—no resurrection—if Jesus viewed the incarnation like we view going to others.

Leaving the familiarity of these walls does not mean we become like those we seek to reach. Paul said in 1st Corinthians 9: *I didn’t take on their way of life. I kept my bearings in Christ—but I entered their world and tried to experience things from their point of view.*

Being around non-believers will not turn us into foaming-at-the-mouth pagans and atheists. If we keep our foundation in Christ, as Paul did, we don’t fear the non-believer. ***Many of you are probably familiar with the movie SISTER ACT, the story of a Reno, Nevada, lounge singer who witnesses a mob hit*** ***and has to go into protective custody until she can testify in court.*** ***She is hidden away in an inner-city convent as a nun, and while there she breathes new life into the choir and church.***

***One scene has Sister Mary Clarence (played by Whoopi Goldberg) trying to convince the Mother Superior to let the nuns*** ***go outside the convent walls and minister to the community.*** ***The Mother Superior comments on how dangerous it is “out there,” but the other nuns are excited about the opportunities*** ***to help others. One of them tells the Mother Superior, “That’s the reason many of us became nuns in the first place.”*** ***The nuns do indeed go out into their neighborhood and lives begin to be transformed by their loving presence.***

That is the call of every Christian and of the church: to stop worrying that our holiness will be polluted—that we don’t know enough--that we don’t know where to go--and to carry the gospel into places of darkness and need. Jesus wants to infect the darkness with his light! The gospel was designed to be portable and we are its carriers.

Let’s listen to what our hearts are saying. Let’s pray:

*Lord Jesus, we have all the information and knowledge we need. We have our personal testimonies of what you have done in our lives. We have you as our example. We have the Holy Spirit and your authority. So we’re out of excuses. Point us now to the places we are to go. Remind us that you have confidence in us.*

*Right now, Lord, in the deepest recesses of our hearts, there is a place that we know we can go. Right now, Lord, many of us are pressing that thought back down, hoping you didn’t see it. Many of us are already building our excuses against that place that you have stirred within us.*

*Calm us with your presence, Good Jesus. You are not worried that the sins of others will rub off on us; you are confident that through our willingness to go and listen, your holiness will rub off on them. Blessed are you, Lord Jesus, who has entrusted the gospel to us! Forgive our reluctances and excuses, and fill us anew with power undreamed of. In the name of the One who sends and models what it is to be sent, Jesus Christ. Amen.*