

## The Hope of a Plan

1. Happy Mother's Day to all of you Moms, Grandmas and Great Grandmas. We want to thank you for your love for us.
2. My message today will be about the **hope** that we have in the plan of Jesus and why that matters **today** in May of 2021.
3. We will start in John's Gospel, just after his resurrection
4. We will look at a bit of Old Testament for foundation and a look at a Biblical thread
5. I will share some of my story
6. And we will finish with Paul's spiritual son, Timothy.

My starting scripture for today will be the from the Gospel of John Chapter 20:19-23,

### John 20:19-23 (NLT2)

<sup>19</sup> 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. <sup>20</sup> As he spoke, he showed them the wounds in his hands and his side. They were filled with joy when they saw the Lord! <sup>21</sup> Again he said, "**Peace** be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> Then he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. <sup>23</sup> If you forgive anyone's sins, they are forgiven. If you do not forgive them, they are not forgiven."

### Let's Pray

To start I want to focus on two word from this passage, **fear**, or afraid, and send or **sent**.

Have you ever had fear or been afraid? What were the circumstances? What were you afraid of? Violence? Ridicule? Embarrassment?

Have you ever feared being alone or being left behind?

What might have relieved that fear?

If Jesus had walked into your presence at that moment, what would have been your reaction? **Peace**?

Let's look at the context of what the Apostle John recorded.

On Thursday night Jesus was arrested, then Crucified on Friday and then He rose again on Sunday. Jesus had shown himself to a few people after his resurrection: To a few of the women, and to a few of the men on the road to Emmaus. (Luke 24:13) These two men were probably in the room too. It was locked.

Confused, elated, doubtful, and fearful, the disciples stayed close together, hoping to endure the waiting in one place. They were **AFRAID** of both the Romans and the Jewish leaders and **perplexed** about those that had seen Jesus.

They were huddled behind locked doors when Jesus appeared to all of them

Then, **Jesus shows up**, we don't know if he knocked, but we find him, likely, in the same upper room as the Passover meal.

What does He say: "**Peace** be with you" (no anxiety here), then Jesus says: "As the Father **sent** me, I am **Sending** you."

This idea of sending is not new and God's Peace being with those He sent is not new either.

All along, God has a plan.

Now, Let's look at some scripture, then we will look at our own circumstances.

We can go all the way back to Genesis 1, but we will jump to Genesis 11 and see one of the threads that runs through Scripture: **God will never leave us or forsake us.** – We have no need for fear.

There was a man, his name was Abram. God had spoken to his father, Tarah in Genesis 11, at the end of one of the genealogies, turn with me and let's read:

### Genesis 11: 31-32

<sup>31</sup>One day Tarah took his son Abram, his daughter-in-law Sarai (his son Abram's wife), and his grandson Lot (his son Haran's child) and moved away from Ur of the Chaldeans. He was headed for the land of Canaan, but they stopped at Haran and settled there. <sup>32</sup>Tarah lived for 205 years and died while still in Haran.

They settle in what is now central Turkey, still a long way from Canaan.

In the next chapter, God speaks to Abram, and invites him to complete the journey to Canaan, again, all part of God's plan.

### Genesis Chapter 12

#### *The Call of Abram*

The LORD had said to Abram, "Leave your native country, your relatives, and your father's family, and go to the land that I will show you. <sup>2</sup>I will make you into a great nation. I will bless you and make you famous, and you will be a blessing to others. <sup>3</sup>**I will bless those who bless you and curse those who treat you with**

**contempt. All the families (or tribes or nations) on earth will be blessed through you."**

<sup>4</sup>So Abram departed as the LORD had instructed, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran.

<sup>5</sup>He took his wife, Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all his wealth—his livestock and all the people he had taken into his household at Haran—and headed for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in Canaan, <sup>6</sup>Abram traveled through the land as far as Shechem. There he set up camp beside the oak of Moreh. At that time, the area was inhabited by Canaanites.

God **sent** Abraham (or Abram). He gave him His peace, and **HIS presence** as he went into the unknown. Abraham understood that God had a plan. He was obedient to the call. A call of hope and a prophetic call as Jesus would be a descendent of Abraham. (See Matthew Chapter 1). Also, realize that God can use us at any age.

If you have not read it for a while, the story of Abraham and Sarah's lives in Canaan and Egypt is worth a revisit. We can learn from them. They were **NOT** always the most upright and holy people. But God called and they obeyed.

We see another "sending" when the Jewish remnant is marched off to Babylon to spend 70 years in captivity. The prophet Jeremiah tells them, you are being **sent** and as the Babylonian city prospers, you will prosper. You can just imagine what might have gone through their minds. "We are being hauled off as captives and you are talking about prospering?"

Even though the captives felt abandoned, God was with them. Through the Babylonian captivity and the takeover by the Medes and Persians. Once again, God had a plan.

Seventy years later, we get to the book of Ezra and King Cyrus (a Persian King that was foretold by Isaiah), and he **Sends** the Jewish remnant back to Jerusalem to rebuild the temple, and eventually the

walls too. Why were they **sent** back? To prepare a city for Jesus, our savior. God had a plan!

Now, let's move into the New Testament. Not that there aren't **many** more examples in the Old Testament, but it is Mother's Day and many of you may have plans.

Back in John 20 we read that "As the Father sent me, I am sending you," but this was not the first time that Jesus did this, in fact Jesus had done this twice before, turn with me to the Gospel of Mark,

*Mark 6: 6-13*

#### *Jesus Sends Out the Twelve Disciples*

Then Jesus went from village to village, teaching the people. <sup>7</sup> And he called his twelve disciples together and began **sending** them out two by two, giving them authority to cast out evil spirits. <sup>8</sup> He told them to take nothing for their journey except a walking stick—no food, no traveler's bag, no money. <sup>9</sup> He allowed them to wear sandals but not to take a change of clothes.

<sup>10</sup> "Wherever you go," he said, "stay in the same house until you leave town. <sup>11</sup> But if any place refuses to welcome you or listen to you, shake its dust from your feet as you leave to show that you have abandoned those people to their fate."

<sup>12</sup> So the disciples went out, telling everyone they met to repent of their sins and turn to God. <sup>13</sup> And they cast out many demons and healed many sick people, anointing them with olive oil.

For Jesus' disciples, this was a new thing, but they had seen Jesus example: He prayed and met with the Father, morning and night.

I think that Jesus checked in with the Father in the morning and get His daily instructions and in the evening to give a report about His day.

We can learn from that; this is part of what Jesus call us to do too. To Check in and check out and let Him know how life is going.

Now, put yourself in the place of the disciples; Jesus **sends** them to places where have no friends, no family, In Matthew's Gospel, this sending takes place shortly after all 12 Apostles have been called and Matthew gives a bit more color, turn with me to Matthew Chapter 10:

Matthew 10: 11-15

<sup>11</sup> "Whenever you enter a city or village, search for a **worthy person** and stay in his home until you leave town. <sup>12</sup> When you enter the home, give it your blessing. <sup>13</sup> If it turns out to be a worthy home, let your blessing stand; if it is not, take back the blessing. <sup>14</sup> If any household or town refuses to welcome you or listen to your message, shake its dust from your feet as you leave. <sup>15</sup> I tell you the truth, the wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah will be better off than such a town on the judgment day.

Jesus give the instructions to search out a **Person of Peace** and give blessings. I wonder what would happen in our lives if we did that.

And Jesus does this again later when He sends out the 72.

In Luke chapter 10 we read:

#### **Luke Chapter 10**

##### *Jesus Sends Out His Disciples*

The Lord now chose seventy-two other disciples and sent them ahead in pairs to all the towns and places he planned to visit.

<sup>2</sup> These were his instructions to them: "The harvest is great, but the workers are few. So pray to the Lord who is in charge of the harvest; ask him to send more workers into his fields. <sup>3</sup> Now go, and remember that I am sending you out as lambs among wolves.

<sup>4</sup> Don't take any money with you, nor a traveler's bag, nor an extra pair of sandals. And don't stop to greet anyone on the road.

<sup>5</sup> "Whenever you enter someone's home, first say, 'May God's peace be on this house.' <sup>6</sup> If those who live there are peaceful, the blessing will stand; if they are not, the blessing will return to you.

<sup>7</sup> Don't move around from home to home. Stay in one place, eating and drinking what they provide. Don't hesitate to accept hospitality, because those who work deserve their pay.

<sup>8</sup> "If you enter a town and it welcomes you, eat whatever is set before you. <sup>9</sup> Heal the sick, and tell them, 'The Kingdom of God is near you now.' <sup>10</sup> But if a town refuses to welcome you, go out into its streets and say, <sup>11</sup> 'We wipe even the dust of your town from our feet to show that we have abandoned you to your fate. And know this—the Kingdom of God is near!' <sup>12</sup> I assure you, even wicked Sodom will be better off than such a town on judgment day.

<sup>13</sup> "What sorrow awaits you, Korazin and Bethsaida! For if the miracles I did in you had been done in wicked Tyre and Sidon, their people would have repented of their sins long ago, clothing themselves in burlap and throwing ashes on their heads to show their remorse. <sup>14</sup> Yes, Tyre and Sidon will be better off on judgment day than you. <sup>15</sup> And you people of Capernaum, will you be honored in heaven? No, you will go down to the place of the dead."

<sup>16</sup> Then he said to the disciples, "Anyone who accepts your message is also accepting me. And anyone who rejects you is rejecting me. And anyone who rejects me is rejecting **God, who sent me.**"

<sup>17</sup> When the seventy-two disciples returned, they joyfully reported to him, "Lord, even the demons obey us when we use your name!"

<sup>18</sup> "Yes," he told them, "I saw Satan fall from heaven like lightning! <sup>19</sup> Look, I have given you authority over all the power of the enemy, and you can walk among snakes and scorpions and crush them. Nothing will injure you. <sup>20</sup> But don't rejoice because

evil spirits obey you; rejoice because your names are registered in heaven."

### *Jesus' Prayer of Thanksgiving*

<sup>21</sup> At that same time Jesus was filled with the joy of the Holy Spirit, and he said, "O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, thank you for hiding these things from those who think themselves wise and clever, and for revealing them to the childlike. Yes, Father, it pleased you to do it this way.

<sup>22</sup> "My Father has entrusted everything to me. No one truly knows the Son except the Father, and no one truly knows the Father except the Son and those to whom the Son chooses to reveal him."

<sup>23</sup> Then when they were alone, he turned to the disciples and said, "Blessed are the eyes that see what you have seen. <sup>24</sup> I tell you, many prophets and kings longed to see what you see, but they didn't see it. And they longed to hear what you hear, but they didn't hear it."

Jesus rejoiced in the report when they returned. Do you ever wonder how you might make Jesus happy? We have a perfect example here, let's lean into the harvest. The harvest is still great, think about your friends and neighbors that don't know Jesus, that don't know the joys of prayer and fellowship. Think of those who are lonely or don't have friends or family close by. We could be their friend; we could introduce them to the joy of knowing Jesus and being sent by Him into the world.

Now, let me tell you a bit of my story about an occasion when I was literally **SENT**.

The CEO of the company that I was working for at that time called me into his office and said, "Bob, I am sending you to Maracaibo, Venezuela, the people there have asked for some training and you

are the person to do it. You have 10 days to prepare. You will be there for at least two weeks, maybe more.”

I felt like one of the 70 that Jesus sent out. You are sending me WHERE? I wasn’t even sure where Maracaibo was. When I looked on the map, I realized that this was in western Venezuela. Where Hugo Chavez was dictator. When I checked in with the Lord that evening I said, “Lord, I am going to Maracaibo in 10 days, do you know why? Please prepare the way for me. I don’t know anyone there, perhaps you do?”

Notice my doubt. I felt a bit like Jonah, should I go catch a ship in the other direction?

Maracaibo is an oil town, like Huston, Texas. It is also the headquarters of PDVSA, the state oil company of Venezuela, this was a customer that we had been trying to court for years.

So, I prepared and went, I did not realize how far east Venezuela was, I thought it was south of Miami, Florida, but it is a six-hour flight from Houston. When I arrived, I cleared immigration and all of my bags were opened and dumped by customs. They wanted to know what each thing was and why I was in Venezuela. Of course, some of my gear looked suspicious, especially when the guards realized that these were some kind of fancy radio. Not even knowing what the instruments were, they wanted to confiscate them. I explained that I was here to teach some of their industrial engineers how to use wireless, toxic gas detection to keep people safe in the refineries and chemical plants. They had me pay \$400.00, for bringing industrial samples into the country. It was an interesting start for a first encounter in a new country.

I was met outside the airport by my host, one of the ten men that I would be training that week, he said that it would be a different group the second week. This was not what I had planned. How do you

cram a two-week course into one week and then do it again? It did not work out that way.

We drove from the airport to the hotel, my host gave me an hour to get settled and said that we would be going to dinner, but I looked at my watch and it was already 9:00 PM. Really, I just wanted to sleep after the long day of travel. But to dinner we did go and much to my surprise, all ten of my first group of students were there along with their supervisors. This was a Sunday night, I’m glad that I packed a tie, they were all in suits.

I was picked up at 7:30 AM the next morning for the one-hour drive to the training center. They asked if we could take the long way today so that they could show off their beautiful city. We drove past very nice homes, interesting Spanish architecture and then to the central plaza with its grand Cathedral. It was huge, Spanish-gothic with Lots of stained-glass windows. It was beautiful and they were very proud of it.

We arrived at the training center and they helped me unpack my equipment. At about 10:30 AM they asked me to stop. A huge tray of Venezuelan cakes and coffee was brought in, this ended up being a one-hour break. I’m glad we got the snack, lunch on their schedule was not until 1:30 PM. The teaching day ended at 6:30 PM. At which time they again took me to dinner. It was dark as we drove back to my hotel. My host was telling all about his family and the families of the other members of his team. This was a tight knit group. As we got to know each other and others of the team did the driving, I got to know each of them and some of the local customs and celebrations. I asked them about their Cathedral and how often they attended mass, there was laughter from each of them, as though that was not what mattered in life. They attended at Christmas and Easter, as was their custom. I asked why they did not attend any other time? They said that religion was pointless. They were surprised when I agreed. But, I

said, “religion may be pointless, but Jesus is not.” They did not understand.

A few days later we drove the shorter route, through the poorer part of town to the training center and we passed a squat building that was labeled as the Church of Jesus. What is that I asked? “Oh, that is where the Christians meet.” So, I asked, “Christians, what do you mean? Don’t you call yourselves Christians?” No, they said, but they are different. “But how?” I asked. So, this opened the door to many conversations about what being Christian means and how it is different than religion. The next day we drove a different route, this time past a dump. You could tell, it smelled bad. At the base of the dump mound was a large white tent with kids and adults lined up. “What is that,” I asked? “Oh,” they exclaimed, “that is those crazy Christians feeding the poor.” I said, “this is a rich city, why do you have poor? This is a socialist country where everyone is supposed to have work.” Well, yes, all of us educated have work, but many come into the city from the Jungles and farms looking for work and they are not educated, so there are no jobs for them.” Really! This is not how I thought the system worked.

Well, our lunch time conversation that day was on ethics and the ethics of work and what God thought about work. That evening the dinner conversation shifted. Suddenly, it was like the scales had been peeled back from the eyes of these men and they saw the state of their city for the first time. I got to ask them, “What do you think that Jesus would have to say about those people at the dump?” A few thought that they had gotten what they deserved, but others said, there should not be poor and starving people.

God works in mysterious ways!

Friday came and they asked if we could do a Saturday morning session. I had covered most of my material, so the extra half day would be good review. We had a good working session and I felt that

they could manage the equipment. I asked the man that drove me that day if he could take me to the Christian church that we had seen on Sunday morning, he agreed.

Sunday morning four of the men showed up to attend church with me.

None had ever been to a Christian church, and they would not be outdone by this foreigner (not exactly the language that they used).

After church they took me to lunch, they were baffled that I knew what was going on in the service and they had lots of questions. It turned into a long afternoon.

Monday morning, one of the same men came to pick me up for the second week of training. I was surprised. He said that four of them had asked to attend again as they had many questions for me. Not so much about the equipment, but about Jesus.

By the end of the second week four of the men had asked to receive Jesus.

The Holy spirit had been at work. The harvest is ripe, I got to harvest for the Lord’s glory.

To finish up and bring this morning back into Mother’s Day, I want to talk about someone else that was **sent**, he was the son of Jewish mother and Greek father and was born in Lystra. This was a city that Paul and Silas traveled through on Paul’s first missionary journey. This is the story of two women who were faithful to the Gospel, to Matthew 28, to making disciples who make disciples. About teaching this young man to trust in the salvation that Jesus offers each one of us. In this case with their own son and grandson.

Turn with me to **2 Timothy 1:5**

<sup>5</sup> I remember your genuine faith, for you share the faith that first filled your grandmother Lois and your mother, Eunice. And I know that same faith continues strong in you. <sup>6</sup> This is why I remind you to fan into flames the spiritual gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you. <sup>7</sup> For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

<sup>8</sup> So never be ashamed to tell others about our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, either, even though I'm in prison for him. With the strength God gives you, be ready to suffer with me for the sake of the Good News. <sup>9</sup> For God saved us and called us to live a holy life. He did this, not because we deserved it, but because that was his plan from before the beginning of time—to show us his grace through Christ Jesus.

Let's get a bit of context, what is going on here:

Timothy was one of Paul's closest companions. Paul had sent Timothy to the church at Ephesus to counter the false teaching that had arisen there ([1:3, 4](#)). Timothy probably served for a time as a leader in the church at Ephesus. Paul hoped to visit Timothy ([3:14, 15](#); [4:13](#)), but in the meantime, he wrote this letter to give Timothy practical advice about the ministry.

Timothy became like a son to Paul and traveled extensively with him. But his salvation happened in Lystra from his Jewish mother and Grandmother, they that had head Paul preach the message salvation in the Synagogue years earlier. That is what Jesus calls us to as parents, to prepare our children for ministry, to make disciples that make disciples..

### God had a plan.

This thread started with a young fanatic Jewish Pharisee, who held the coats of those that chose to stone the first Christian martyr. A man that was **sent** by God to Damascus and was blinded before he

got there. A man that was **sent**, truly a sinner **sent** by God. Just like us, we are sinners sent by God, that he wants to use for His Glory.

Our hope this morning is knowing that God has a plan for each of us. He has instructions for us to go into the world and make disciples, teaching people to obey. His promise is that His Holy Spirit is with us always, to the end of the age. Now, stop with me. Think about your life, your work, your street, your apartment complex. We live in a unique place. God has sent the world to us. Think about who God's spirit is preparing for you meet and share the love of Jesus? Your children? A coworker? A neighbor? An international student? Some of may even be called to ends of the earth.

Our power is that His spirit is with us every step of the way. And all of us have a role to play in expanding the Kingdom of God.

I close with the words of Jesus from the upper room:

“Again, he said, “**Peace** be with you. As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you.”

### Let's Pray.