



January 12, 2014  
Pastor Megan Hackman  
Chapel Hill Presbyterian Church

## *Our Call: OUT*

Genesis 12:1-3; Luke 10:1-2; Acts 1:8

A Wednesday night in 2006, I knew God was speaking to me. I was reading Isaiah 43 out loud, and it resonated deeply in my soul, as if it were being spoken to me directly. "You will be my witness. I will bring my sons and daughters from the north, south, east, and west. I will open eyes that are blind and ears that are deaf." I was overwhelmed. Clearly I was going to be a missionary to the ends of the earth. I needed to break up with my boyfriend, Larry. I needed to spend the next 4 days in prayer and fasting because clearly, on Saturday when I left to lead a college mission trip to Bolivia, clearly I was going to stay there and change the world for Jesus.

Well, I didn't break up with Larry. That's its own story. I did go to Bolivia with huge expectations for miracles and awe of the Spirit moving, but I spent more time in the bathroom than the villages. Me and Bolivian red meat were a bad pairing. From that experience forward, I have wrestled with this call OUT. What does this mean when I love the world, but have not yet had the chance to be effective in foreign countries? That's today's challenge. What does it mean to live where we are, called out?

As Christians we live with interworking calls UP, IN, and OUT. Our vision as a church is (one more time, altogether) "working together to present everyone mature in Christ." And our elders have defined maturity for us as a community of worship UP, discipleship, IN, and mission, OUT. Do you remember Pastor Mark's hand motions? UP, IN, and OUT. Today's call is OUT.

The most obvious passage of Scripture we could talk about today would be Jesus' last words. From Matthew 28: "Go, making disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I will be with you to the very end of the age." Jesus' commission to us was out. But it wasn't a new message for God's people. We're going to start today at the start of the Bible, Genesis. And we're going to see that the God's direction has always been a call OUT.

Gen 12:1-3 The Father calls us OUT.

God has a specific plan for making himself known to the world. He is going to reveal himself to one people, those will be God's people. That sounds so elitist, so exclusive. How will the rest of the world know who he is? He is going to send out

his people to the rest of the world, and God is going to reveal himself through them. God has chosen to limit himself in this way. God chooses a people and calls them OUT.

Look at Genesis 12:1-3.

The Lord had said to Abram, "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you.

2 "I will make you into a great nation,  
and I will bless you;

I will make your name great,  
and you will be a blessing.

3 I will bless those who bless you,  
and whoever curses you I will curse;  
and all peoples on earth  
will be blessed through you."

This story is one of the Bible's first. This is really a capstone verse for the rest of the Bible because we are going to see from this point in the beginning of the book until Jesus is born about halfway through here, that God is fulfilling these specific promises to one nationality of people—the Israelites, the bloodline of Israel—and everyone who stuck with them.

We see here that God makes the first move OUT. He reveals himself. This passage is God speaking to Abram and promising him that the whole world will know who God is and will personally experience his blessing because that knowledge and the love of God will pass through Abram and his line into the whole rest of the world. God makes the move OUT to make himself known to a people. Then, he expects that people will turn OUT and pass around the knowledge of him.

How did you first hear about the Father? I am going to guess that for most of you, you heard about God through the witness of someone else. Someone else told you about what they learned or experienced of God. My family told me about Jesus. I shared with Bible Quizzers last week about the Bibles given to me by my parents and by both sets of grandparents. Their call OUT included sharing about God with me-- their daughter and granddaughter.

The design of God is that God, our Father, a very personal God, would be known fully in the world person-to-person. We are called "friend of God." It's very personal the way that God wants to know us. And he makes himself known very personally, too. The Father sends a person to share with another person about who He is.

If I may be so bold as to say this, the problem with God's design is that it seems to depend on people to be his witness. And Abram's family stopped sharing with the world about God, the true God, Yahweh, the Creator; instead, they built idols to false gods. The witness of who God is in the world was at stake! So from this

point (Joshua) until this point (Matthew), there are many people called prophets sent to warn the people. They say things like, you are God's people! Why do you submit yourself to little gods? In Isaiah God says, you will be my witnesses to the ends of the earth!

And so the Father sends us OUT, too, to be his witness! When you invite your friends to church, you bring them into the light and witness of God. This is the ministry of evangelism. When you deacons deliver quilts to the hospital that say, "God loves you," you witness who God is. This is the ministry of compassion. I heard from a woman before first service who came last night to see Nefarius, a movie about sex-trafficking. She's going to write a letter to the senator about the need for Washington state laws to protect women. This is the ministry of justice. And we as a church, corporately, engage in God's mission out in these 3 areas: ministries of evangelism, compassion, and justice.

The message of the prophets was that God's people failed to show the world who God is perfectly. And we know that we are unable to show who God is perfectly. We as God's people are unable to overcome our sin. We are so like the Israelites, prone to idolatry, to turning to other ways of getting what we want and offering our worship to fame and career, to money and to prestige, to busyness and knowledge instead of to God.

God had made the first move OUT by revealing himself. So now God makes the next move OUT, too. God came OUT of heaven and he sent his Son OUT into the world to show us who he is. John 1 says that in the person of Jesus, we have beheld his glory. The glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth. And guess what the Son, Jesus, wants us to do with what we know about God through him? The Son calls us OUT to be his witness in the world.

Luke 10: 1-2 The Son calls us OUT.

Look at Luke 10: 1-2.

Luke is one of the 4 books called the Gospels that record Jesus' life. And Luke 10 is in the middle of Jesus' ministry on earth. We only have 3 precious years of Jesus ministering in the world, and in the middle of it, he sends his key leaders OUT. They have all just seen an incredible miracle of a boy being delivered from a demon followed by some difficult teaching about the cost of following Jesus. Then comes this, Luke 10: 1-2.

"After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. 2 He told them, 'The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.'"

There is a rhythm to following Jesus. It's a balanced diet as Pastor Mark and Pastor Larry have already been speaking about. The disciples spent time worshipping Jesus. In Luke 9 a few of them got to experience the Transfiguration, where they saw Jesus talking with the Father and Moses and Elijah-- an incredible moment of their Call UP. Then we see them called IN to one another with teachings just for the disciples. They traveled together and ate together. Now, it's time to go OUT. Jesus the Son reiterates what the Father has been doing all along. The direction Jesus sends his people is OUT.

He calls them to a plentiful harvest. It's not literal wheat for Larry's diet of peanut butter and jelly. No! This is a metaphor for people. Jesus is saying that the call OUT looks like the call to go out and work the field. Working in the field a rhythm of planting. Our spiritual life is often likened the same way. It was an image that the people of the Bible understood well in their agrarian society.

The first is tilling the ground, and it is likened to relationally connecting with people and encouraging them. Disciples of Jesus love people and are in genuine relationship with them. This is tilling the ground. The friends that you have are your friends. Not my friends, not Pastor Mark's friends. And God's desire is you would know them and love them and encourage them to see God and to recognize how much he loves them.

Harvest workers then plant seeds. As Christians, we share the Good News that God, the Creator, has made himself known to us by becoming one of us! God is Jesus who lived the perfect life we could not, died the death we deserve, and was raised to life just as we will be raised. He extends forgiveness to us so that we can know him now in this life and live with him forever! He has saved us. When you share that with other people, you are planting seeds.

Then comes the part where my garden always fails. It's the dirty work of watering and pulling out weeds. This is the call to daily discipleship, the call IN that we talked about last week. We see Jesus do this in Luke chapter 9. He is teaching them and calling them out when they do things like argue with each other, as we see right there in the same chapter. All of that is the sustained call IN.

Finally, the harvest comes and it's time to bring in the harvest. Spiritually, this is talking about living the full-on Kingdom life with God. We are bearing fruit, that means our lives are witnesses to God's love and peace. We love others well. We experience the healing that Jesus' presence brings in the world. People who participate in the harvest experience the eternity of God's kingdom every day.

And Luke says that Jesus is the Lord of the harvest. He says that the harvest is plentiful—the people ready to live the Kingdom life of love and peace and healing are many! But the workers are few. The people who are willing to till, to love genuinely, to plant, to share about God's good news, to water and rip out the weeds, to disciple others, and to finally call them to the fullness of life with Jesus

in love and peace and healing—those kind of people are few. So pray, Jesus says, pray earnestly that Jesus, the Lord of the harvest, would send out workers into the world.

Are you aware of the world in this way? Do you love the people in the world? Jesus called very imperfect people to go OUT ahead of him. The disciples were just arguing, for goodness sake! But we aren't supposed to wait until we are perfect to respond to Jesus' call OUT. He is the one who is Lord of the harvest. He is the one who's going to tell us what to do. Just get OUT into the world, says Jesus!

You might be terrified at this point at what that looks like. First, you might be scared off by words like evangelism and mission. They don't have good connotations in the world today. Maybe you don't have fears about the words but about the actual tasks. I, for one, have never delivered anyone from a demon. I know I don't have all the right answers.

Back before Larry and I dated, he pointed out just how inadequate I was as an evangelist. We met in classic pastor fashion. We met in a summer evangelism class that I was teaching. Larry asked me if I knew where my roommate—a good friend of mine I had lived with for 2 years—he asked if I knew where she was with God. I had no idea. So I went home and asked (timidly), Amy, do you believe in God? “Well, yeah!” After all, I was in Tennessee. Amy, do you believe in Jesus? “Well, yeah, like I know he's God and died on a cross for my sins. But I know that if I believed, like really believed, like you do, my life would have to be different. And I'm not ready for that.”

It's the most honest response about faith anyone has ever given me. So I just continued as a tiller and planted seeds. I loved her, genuinely! Still do! We were in each others' weddings. After first service, Glenn reminded me of 1 Corinthians 3:6. Paul says, “I planted the seed, Apollos watered.” And in August of 2012, a pastor in Florida brought in the harvest as Amy gave her life to Jesus. She was baptized my third week of working here. What I love most about that 1 Corinthians 3:6 passage is it says Paul planted the seed, Apollos watered, and God made it grow. The work of the harvest does not depend us. It depends upon God. And he sends the Holy Spirit to work through us.

He sends us in the power of the Holy Spirit. Look with me at Acts 1:8. Jesus has died and risen from the dead. He had walked with his people for 40 days in a resurrected body. Now he is preparing to ascend into heaven. And this is what he tells his followers.

Acts 1:8 The Spirit calls us OUT.

“You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Here's the design of God still at work. God's direction has always been a call OUT. Now that they have seen what it looks like for God himself to live a sent life OUT as a human being, perfectly, he now empowers us to live as he lived. He gives us the power of the Holy Spirit to be his witness. We go ahead of him, preparing people to receive Jesus.

We are just the witness to Jesus. He himself is the light, the healing, the hope, and the love. We extend light, healing, hope, and love as his witness.

The Spirit calls us OUT to Jerusalem, that is, to the immediate area where they were here in Acts 1. He calls us to Judea, that is, to the surrounding area. He calls us to Samaria, the place of racial tension, the shunned places, the unloveable places. And finally, he calls us to the ends of the earth. We have our own areas that we are being called out to. We have our Jerusalem. If you live around the church, that area is Gig Harbor. We have our Judea in the Key Peninsula, Tacoma, and Seattle. We have our Samarias. These areas not pc. They are not politically correct. And even if I were to speak some of them out loud, I am sure to ruffle some feathers. So I will just confess that my own Samarias—the places that I find really difficult to love personally and that I am personally terrified of, the places I would be happy to walk 100 miles around to avoid—those areas for me are these issues of the sex industry and sex trafficking, homelessness, and poverty. What are yours? Take just a moment to confess to the Lord that being asked to be a worker—a courier of the Good News into these areas is terrifying for you.

And finally, the Spirit calls us OUT to the ends of the earth. That's where many of the missionaries we support are. They're in Cambodia, Swaziland, Zambia, Germany...

If you are not currently engaging in this call OUT, I encourage you to grab one of these flyers from the Connect Center and engage in the call OUT. But the call OUT isn't something we ADD onto our life as if it were another spoke. The call OUT as those who carry God's mission of salvation to the world is the call of our everyday life. We need to see our lives differently. We need to see that our lives are on mission. I've invited some friends to come and share how they are called OUT in God's world in their everyday lives.

*[First service: Diana Wimber, Monty Sisson; Second service: Lilly Gore, Dawn Muench, Monty Sisson]*

For the benediction, I want us to stand by the area we are called to work. If the Spirit has called you into one of these areas, I want you to stand. I'll start with the ends of the earth, then those Samarias, then the surrounding areas, then our own zip code. Where has God called you to labor for the cause of the Kingdom?

Ends of the Earth? Samarias—the difficult places. Judea—the surrounding areas, KP, Tacoma, Seattle, commute. Jerusalem—right here at home.

Do you see the whole body? We are called out. Tiersa is leaving for Swaziland. You will go to work in Seattle. Youth will serve in Mexico. Lilly's going to her 3<sup>rd</sup> grade classroom. I'll stick right here by the church. And together, we are all called OUT. Receive this benediction from God who has called you out. The Lord bless you...