

Tyler Callum

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So I think we all have those parts of our jobs that are not difficult, but we just do not enjoy doing them. I don't think I am alone in this, do you all feel the same way? For me, that little thing is coming up with the sermon title, it isn't that hard, it isn't super important to the flow of worship, but I struggle to come up with a title I like as I put the bulletin together at the beginning of the week. Now that I print the bulletins, I could easily change it at any time, but I never do. I come up with a title, normally one that is just vague enough to cover whatever I decide to write about later in the week. And I just hope that no one places too many expectations on the title. But this week, as we leave Easter, drawing close to the ascension of Christ, we come to the Great Commission, and I wanted a title that is more focused. I wanted to come up with a title that spoke to the magnitude of what Jesus is commissioning us to do. So I thought about it and I pondered it, and finally I decided that the best possible title came from one of my favorite movies, the Blues Brothers. The phrase "we're on a mission from God" is peppered throughout the film by Elwood Blues as they try to get the \$10,000 needed to save the orphanage, which had been their home. Their efforts get increasingly ridiculous as the film progresses until they finally deliver the \$10,000 as they are chased by all manner of law enforcement, and Illinois Nazis.

This film is very ridiculous, but as the Church we are on a mission from God. But what does this mean? What preposterous actions are we called to by God? As we meditate on our Great Commission, I invite each one of you to consider what crazy, preposterous, ridiculous

thing God is calling you to do, to what far flung place God is sending this congregation to share the Good News, to what hopeless people God is sending us to share the joy of God's grace.

Since we are Presbyterians after all, we need to do this decently and in order. Before we can consider where we are being sent, we must first consider our call. Calling is one of those strange concepts we hear about a lot in church. It is one of those words that gets tossed around in churches but is almost never gets identified. People claim they are called into ministry and mission. Others claim to be called into their profession, and still others talk about being called to their spouse, or being a parent. In Scripture we hear the call stories of Isaiah and Paul, and so many other. We hear call stories so beautiful and sure. We hear a lot about what people are called to, and we always nod along in agreement. We listen to what other people describe and it often sounds like the scene from the calling of Isaiah, their call stories sound grand and majestic. Even as someone who has felt called to ministry, I read the passage from Isaiah about his prophetic calling and wonder, is this what it's supposed to be like? I sure hope not, or I think we all might be in trouble here.

So let us go to our Gospel story and hope we can find something that transcends our everyday life, to be worthy of being called a calling, but real enough to be something that is not only for prophets from long ago, but for each of us. In the Easter account from Matthew's Gospel, we first find a story that should seem all too familiar by now. We come to the empty tomb with the women, who encounter an angel. And we wonder, what else ya got Matthew? After the obligatory statements from the angel telling the women not to be afraid, the angel tells them to take a message back to the other disciples. This message, this precious message they have been tasked with sharing, is not only that Jesus has been raised that is only half of the Good

News, but that Jesus has gone ahead of them into Galilee, and they will see Him there. These women, the original bearers of the resurrection hope, are taking a message to the disciples, who have been scattered since the events of Good Friday. This message will call the scattered people together, it will create a community that did not exist before, it will create a community out of a handful of fisherman and tax collectors, from women overlooked by their society, and zealots alike. This message will call them all together to send them out. This message still calls together diverse and different people, together into community. This is the calling we hear, not a grand vision in front of God's throne, but a simple calling that brings us together with people we have nothing else in common with other than this message of forgiveness and life that stands at the center of our life together. A message that brings us into community with one another. That is our calling.

After these women hear the unifying call of God's grace, they are told they are being sent to the other disciples, so that they can all be sent into Galilee. So they can be sent away from Jerusalem, where this whole story has been marching towards for so long, so they can go out into the world. They will go into Galilee, a place on the fringe, a place where Jesus spent so much of His public ministry healing the broken. But as they go out to where Christ is sending them, the angel tells them that Christ will be waiting for them there. Not only will Christ walk with them, as the journey towards Galilee, they are told He is already there, waiting for them.

If we have any delusions about our role in spreading the Good News, Matthew is quick to squash it. As we hear the angel give us this same message so many centuries later, we are quick to end once we hear our part of this mission. We are ready to go out into the world, doing our part, going into the Galilees of the world. But it is clear, Christ is already in these places, Christ

is waiting for you in Galilee, wherever you are being sent, Christ is already present. There is no where you can go that Christ has not gone out ahead of you, there is no place no forsaken that Christ has not gone our ahead of you. Wherever you go, Jesus is already there, waiting for you, Christ is already at work in the lives you are being sent to. No matter where you go, to people who have never heard about Christ, to the hopeless people living in poverty, to addicts who have driven everyone else away, to patients who live in despair after hearing a terminal illness, Christ is already there. Jesus is already at work, the grace of God is already present, no matter where your Galilee is. So as we go out into our Galilees, we go telling people of the healing that Christ is already doing, the Good News is nothing we can do for them, but what Christ has already begun doing before we even arrived.

After the women leave the tomb and the angel, Jesus appears to the women on the road. They bow down and worship their risen Lord, grabbing ahold of His feet, embracing the God they can touch, the God who died to love them, the God who rose again and would never leave their presence. This God repeats to them the same message that the angel gave to them, Jesus tells them to go to the disciples and tell them to go into Galilee, and there they will see Him. The message from the angel tells us that Jesus will be ahead of us, but here Jesus says something else. He does not negate what the angel said, but He tells these women, that when they go to into Galilee they will see Him. As they, as we, go out into the world, as we go out into our Galilees, whether they are around the world or into our own communities, we will see the Christ. That is a promise that Christ makes to us, no matter where our Galilee is. As we go into these places on the fringes, places we would never go, we are told by the risen Jesus that is where we will find Him. That is exactly where we not only see the work of Jesus being done ahead of us, but where

we will see Christ. Where will we see Christ in the face of those who suffer, in the eyes of those who mourn. This is where we will find the Christ who we cling to as these women do. We go out into the world, not because of what we can do, but because as we are sent we see our Lord, where we meet our Christ. It is where what we think we know about God's grace is challenged and expanded, where we find the presence of our God in places we would never expect.

Matthew does not give us the scene where the women finally take this dense message to the eleven disciples, instead picking up when they have already gathered in Galilee. Matthew tells us that Jesus appeared and they worshipped Him, even though some doubted. Their doubt does not take over this narrative, because there is something more important at work here. Jesus declares that all authority in heaven and on earth has been given to Him, there is no authority other than His, no authority above the will of our Lord, no authority which can deny or stand in the way of the commission He is about to give to His Church for all time. Unlike before where Jesus commanded the disciples to go to a specific geographic location, Jesus just tells them to go, go and make disciples of all nations. Go and baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Go, teaching them all that Jesus commanded. Go remembering that Christ is with you, now until the end of the age. Go knowing that Christ goes out before you, and when you go out you do not bring Christ to those without Him, but see Christ as you go out. We are on a mission from God, so go.