

Sermon - 12/18/22
Is 7:10-16; Ps 80:1-19; Ro 1:1-7; Mt 1:28-25
We're on a Mission from God

As I watch my six-year-old and eight-year-old grandsons, Max and Malcolm, run and wrestle, play with their trucks and trains and dinosaurs, I am amazed at their curiosity – and their energy! They don't stop moving except when they're asleep. I pray they will be life-long learners and men of faith. Adults say we wish we had that kind of energy. Here's the thing: I believe the Lord is ready and willing to energize us by the power of the Holy Spirit. He sends us on a mission. We're on a mission from God.

We see in the Apostle Paul some of the same character qualities as my grandsons – vitality, restlessness and persistence in pressing into the work of the Gospel – the Good News of Jesus Christ. Paul did not tire, and he didn't retire in any way as he grew older. He traveled, taught, preached, started churches, and argued with the Jewish leaders. Today, as he speaks to the church at Rome, he calls his hearers to “belong to Jesus Christ. To all God's beloved in Rome, who are called to be saints. Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.” (Ro 1:6-7) This calling is not for special persons – with special talents or abilities. Paul is saying that when we belong to Jesus, each one is on a mission from God. Our calling is not to an institution or an organization – we are called to relationship with a Person – the Lord Jesus Christ. He came into the world on Christmas because He loves you and me so much. He deeply desires to rescue us from our sins, from the schemes of the devil, and from death.

Consider the mission of the angels. Angels play a vital role in the Christmas story. Gabriel himself speaks to Mary of Nazareth. Angels speak to Joseph several times. The angel message in our Gospel passage this morning concerns Joseph receiving correction from the Lord. An angel appears to him in his sleep and tells him that what is happening in Mary's body is holy and is ordained by God. Again, when Herod's army was closing in on the newborn Jesus and His parents, angels told Joseph how to protect his family. Angels don't hang around. They had a message from the God for Joseph. They delivered the message. Then they returned to their heavenly home – around the throne of God. Besides, they have choir practice – praise duty – who knows what other things are scheduled in heaven for angels. Maybe they make and serve angel food cake and divinity fudge. Angels speak nothing on their own. They always bear a message from the Lord.

We humans are not like that. We have a gazillion things on our minds. I notice particularly around this Season of Advent I have so many things I need to do in time for the wonderful evening and morning of Jesus' birthday, it's easy to be distracted from my true mission, the Gospel. Who celebrates their Christmas on Christmas Eve? Who celebrates theirs the next morning? Just wondering.

Our goal is not to be more like angels. No, we are called, says the Apostle Paul, to be men and women – boys and girls – who belong to Jesus Christ. We are His and He is ours. Part of our mission is to become **more like Him**.

We are created to bear a message, like the angels, but the way we do it is to tell the Gospel Story again and again. In the Christian year, our lives are evidence of His love and care for everybody around us – especially those who have not yet met our wonderful Savior. This year on Nov 27th, we welcomed in a new year of sharing the Gospel with one another, with our community, even with the whole world. We are Christ-bearers. That is our mission.

John Wesley believed that we are called to “spread Scriptural holiness across the land,” in all that we say and do. If we compare ourselves to Jesus, we are lacking. His mission is to be our Savior and the Savior of the entire cosmos. Compared to the Apostle Paul with his amazing work for the Gospel, again we are underachievers. He worked for the conversion of a large part of the Roman Empire. Compared to angels, we are without focus – distracted, busy and disorganized. Angels do one thing supremely well – then return to the Father to be sent on another mission. We must answer God's calling – but we accomplish this in many, many ways.

Let me close by sharing the life and mission of a remarkable saint – Julian of Norwich. She lived in the 14th c AD in

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Norwich, England. Scholars continue to study her life, because she is a noted mother of the Christian faith – educated in a convent by the nuns. Some researchers now believe that she never took vows as a nun; but was a well-educated lay woman.

We don't know much about her life before she became an anchoress right in the bustling trade city of Norwich in the 1390s. An anchoress is an office of the church for a woman. A man would become a hermit, also a position in the church.

Julian was dedicated in a service of worship conducted by the bishop. After she was blessed, she was led to her cell – apart from the rest of the church. When she entered her rooms, the door was sealed up. There was a window into the chapel through which Julian received her meals, her clean laundry, her mail and so on. Such a life is unimaginable to us in our time, although there are a few who feel called to this life in modern times.

Julian's calling was to be in constant prayer for the whole world, for the church, and for those who came to request prayer and counseling. Once sealed in her cell, she did not leave it for the rest of her life. She was on a mission from God.

In her time as an anchoress, Julian wrote profound theology. She was a visionary. She wrote down her messages from God. These are called *Revelations of Divine Love*.

Julian addressed the problem of sin in her writing. She said:

'You would know our Lord's meaning in this thing? Know it well. Love was his meaning. Who showed it to you? Love. What did he show you? Love. Why did he show it? For love. Hold on to this and you will know and understand love more and more. But you will not know or learn anything else — ever.'

Julian of Norwich, "Revelations of Divine Love".

(accessed at [Wikipedia.com](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Julian_of_Norwich) 12-10-22)

How are you answering God's calling – His mission for you? Remember, you are on a mission from God, empowered by the Holy Spirit. Amen.