

Series: You Are Sent Vol. 3 – “Planning to Go, willing to stay”

Date: 7.18.2021

Text: Acts 18:1-11

Sermon: Live Sent. Right Here, Right Now.

Speaker: Brett Bouldin

Amen. That video gets me fired up! (Discovery Bible Group promo)

How’s everyone doing? Awesome. Well my name is Brett, I am our Student Director in transition here at Mercy-- as you may know, our former Director Allan and his wife M’Lynn are **planning to go** -- in about a year, they are going to uproot their lives here in Charlotte, leave behind their ministry here, and take the Gospel back to Allan’s hometown of Nairobi, Kenya, by planting a church. Isn’t that awesome? That being said, I am so excited to be stepping into this new position...if you have a student that’s not currently plugged into Mercy Students, I would love to meet them, I would love to meet you. Please come say hello after the service.

I’m also really excited to be preaching today, and so I would love to just go to the Lord before we dive in.

Pray.

The passage of scripture that we are going to be working through today is Acts 18:1-11, so if you have your bibles, flip over there. What we are going to see is this glimpse into the

Apostle Paul’s second missionary journey where he decides to stay in a city for a year and a half to do the work of ministry. Up to this point in Paul’s journey, he has been all over the place – he’s been to Jerusalem, he’s been to Cyprus, he’s been to Antioch in Pisidia, he’s been to Iconium, he’s been to Lystra, he’s been to Athens, he’s been to Los Angeles, he’s been to New York, to Disney World...you name it, he’s been there.

Throughout this series, our main emphasis has been this idea of “planning to go, willing to stay.” Well from Acts 13 through 17, we see Paul just going, going, going. He wasn’t just planning to go, he was going. His aim was to “preach the Gospel where Christ was not known.” (Rom 15:20). But then we come to Acts 18 and we see Paul come to a place where he hears from God that he needs to stay put.

For some of you here, this is where you are right now. You’ve been journeying along with our church through this series and have been praying, “Lord I am planning to go” or maybe you’re like Paul and you’re like “Lord I’ve been going, but I can’t help but feel like Charlotte is where you want me right now...so I am willing to stay.” If that’s you, you’re in the right sermon. Dial in!

There may be some of you here who are already fully sold out to the idea of uprooting your life and like Allan and M’Lynn, you are going to move your life somewhere for the sake of the Gospel. If that’s you, praise Jesus! That’s awesome. Please reach out to our missions staff and they can help you think

through whatever questions you may have. But don't check out for this sermon, because this is for you too.

The reality is that right now you are all here in Charlotte, North Carolina (unless you're watching online, then you may be somewhere else and we're glad you're joining us) ...But regardless of where you are, God wants you to leverage this time right now for the glory of Jesus' name.

That's exactly what we're going to be talking about today.

The main point of this sermon is this: LIVE SENT. RIGHT HERE, RIGHT NOW.

My aim for this time is to give you a glimpse from this passage in Acts 18 of how you can leverage your life and live sent today for the sake of the Gospel. I want to show you that you don't have to delay, and you don't have to deliberate. You can be used by Jesus today, and that is actually what He has designed for each one of us. So, what I am going to do is go through Acts 18:1-11 in its entirety, and then I am going to give you points from the text of what it means to "LIVE SENT". Now, this definition is not an exhaustive definition-- I am simply going to take you through this text and we are going to see what it is saying to us, and Lord willing we'll apply it to our lives today.

Y'all with me?

Let's go.

ACTS 18:1-11

After this Paul^[3] left Athens and went to Corinth. **2** And he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome. And he went to see them, **3** and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade. **4** And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks.**5** When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. **6** And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." **7** And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue. **8** Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. **9** **And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people."** **11** And he stayed a year and six months, teaching the word of God among them

Now before we dig in, I want to point out verses 9 and 10 of this passage, because it's absolutely imperative that we understand it. If we miss it, then we'll miss the WHY behind why we should even care about living sent in the first place.

In these verses, the Lord says to Paul:

Don't be afraid, keep speaking and don't be silent, remember I am with you, and know that there are many people in this city who are my people. So, Paul stayed in the city for a year and a half.

The reason why we care about living sent right here and right now is because there are many people in **our city** whom God has chosen before the foundation of the earth to be his sons and daughters! And in the same way that he has chosen to save us, he has chosen to save them, and we who have been redeemed by the blood of Christ get to be heralds of the good news of the Gospel to them! What a privilege for us! This is the WHY behind everything we're talking about today. Paul stayed in Corinth because the Lord told him there were many in the city who were His people, and we, like Paul, are a people who have sent by Jesus to go and make disciples -- and so we live sent right here and right now because there are many people in our city who are God's people.

Amen?

A little background on this passage – Paul has just been in Athens waiting for Silas and Timothy, his ministry partners, who were just north of where he was in Macedonia. What we heard in the sermon last week is that while he was in Athens, he shared the Gospel boldly, and then in typical fashion, he moved on to the next city, Corinth, which is where we find ourselves now.

Now, let me tell you a little bit about Corinth. Corinth was a pretty jacked up place. Although it was a city that thrived through political power and commerce, Corinth was marked by sexual immorality.^[1] To put things in perspective, in the middle of the city was a temple of Aphrodite, the goddess of love, standing on a nineteen-hundred-foot hill. Surrounding this hill, thousands of female slave-priests would walk through the streets of Corinth openly prostituting themselves as worship to this goddess of love.^[2]

Sexual immorality was rampant, idolatry was rampant, and a Gospel movement was desperately needed.

So Paul arrives on the scene, and Acts 18:2-3 says, “**2 ... he found a Jew named Aquila, a native of Pontus, recently come from Italy with his wife Priscilla, because Claudius had commanded all the Jews to leave Rome.**”**3** and because he was of the same trade he stayed with them and worked, for they were tentmakers by trade.

My first point of our definition of living sent is this:

LIVING SENT MEANS EVERYTHING ABOUT YOUR LIFE IS A GOSPEL OPPORTUNITY

And yes. I mean everything!

What I want to do for this point is take some time to focus in on someone other than Paul for just a moment. So throughout our series, we've seen that if there is someone who ever met the qualifications of living "sent", it's Paul. And this makes sense... After all, Paul had a conversation with the resurrected Jesus, where Jesus was like, "hey Paul, I'm sending you!" And really, Paul is the main character of our text. But in this passage, we see these two individuals, Aquila and Priscilla who were pretty normal people like us. They hadn't had a conversation with the resurrected Jesus like Paul did. Yet, these two lived their lives in faithful obedience to Jesus. They viewed their lives as one big opportunity for the Gospel. And I think we can be really encouraged by them today.

So here's what we know about Aquila and Priscilla from the text:

First, verse 2 says that Aquila was a Jew who was married to a woman named Priscilla. Second, we see that they had been exiled from Rome by Claudius because of their faith, so they had come to Corinth – It was likely that they were both already Christians before they met Paul, which is why they had

to leave Rome^[3]. Third, we see that they were tentmakers by trade.

If we do a little digging into the scriptures, what we will see is that Aquila and Priscilla saw their **marriage**, their **work**, and their **home** as an opportunity for the Gospel to go forth.

First, we see them use their marriage as a Gospel opportunity.

These two are mentioned throughout multiple places in the scriptures (Rom 16:3-4; 1 Cor 16:19; 2 Tim 4:19), but never once do we see them mentioned apart from each other. When Paul would write about one of them, he couldn't help but write about the other because they were a dynamic couple who rightly saw their marriage as something that would testify to the world the beauty of Jesus.

In Ephesians 5:31-32, Paul talks about marriage and writes that it's a profound mystery, but it is a picture of Christ and the church – a covenant made before God and man in which a husband and wife sacrificially lay down their lives for one another day in and day out. That is what Aquila and Priscilla did through their marriage! What we see throughout the scriptures is that together they opened their home for Paul to come and live with them (that's in our passage today). Then in 1 Corinthians 16 we see that they opened their home for the church to come and gather. And then at the end of Acts 18 we see that together, they discipled someone. They discipled

Apollos, who was a highly influential teacher who ended up being sent to preach the Gospel to the Jews in Achaia.

These two were fervently committed to using their marriage at all costs as something that could advance the Gospel.

We also see them use their work as a Gospel opportunity

Verse 3 says that they were tentmakers by trade. It's likely that Aquila and Priscilla owned their own leather-making business and so when Paul met them, they hired him and helped him make ends meet as Paul labored for the Gospel. They were a huge reason why Paul could say to the Corinthians in 2 Corinthians 11 that he preached the Gospel free of charge.

They saw their work as a Gospel opportunity and the Gospel went forth in Corinth because of them.

Third, we see them use their home as a Gospel opportunity.

Verse 3 says that Paul stayed with them. He lived in their home. Not only did they hire Paul to work for them, but they also opened the doors of their home to ensure that this brother in Christ had a place to sleep.

On top of that, in 1 Corinthians 16 (as I mentioned before), we see that they also had a church come and meet in their home.

Letting brothers and sisters in Christ into their living space was a normal thing for them.

And you can see Paul's gratitude towards these two in **Romans 16:3-4 when he writes,**

3 Greet Prisca and Aquila, my fellow workers in Christ Jesus, 4 who risked their necks for my life, to whom not only I give thanks but all the churches of the Gentiles give thanks as well.

Aquila and Priscilla viewed their marriage, their work, and their home as Gospel opportunities, and God used them mightily because of it.

Y'all these are just three examples from two ordinary people who loved Jesus and who wanted to be used by Him. Think of all the opportunities that you have today to leverage your own life for the sake of the Gospel here in the city of Charlotte. Your marriage, your singleness, your work, your home, your car, your gym, your school, the restaurants near where you live, your money, your talents, your time...It's all an opportunity for the Gospel to go forth.

And so maybe for you, this means that you and your spouse need to begin to pray for those in your neighborhood and really consider how you can engage those around you and begin to have conversations with them. Maybe this means you should start going to a restaurant like Al-Basha on N Sharon Amity Road, where Muslims regularly eat...so that you can

begin to build relationships with people who are far off from Jesus. Maybe this means that you need to share your faith with your co-worker. Maybe this means opening up your business doors so that people can gather there for a Bible study. Maybe this means you should lead Bible study, or lead a community group! We definitely have a need here for that at Mercy. Y'all, I could go on and on... and trust me when I say that I am preaching to myself as well! I need to be changed by this truth.

There are many people in this city who are God's people...and so if we are going to live sent and reach those people, then we have to see that everything about our life is a Gospel opportunity.

Alright, let's move on.

Acts 18, verses 4 through 7 says this:

4 And he reasoned in the synagogue every Sabbath, and tried to persuade Jews and Greeks. **5** When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. **6** And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." **7** And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.

My second point is this:

LIVING SENT MEANS TELLING PEOPLE ABOUT JESUS

Y'all, this point is just about as straight-forward as it can get. If we are going to live as sent people, then we MUST tell others about the one who has sent us.

How many of y'all in here are sports fans? Alright, me too. I am a huge Panthers fan -- I firmly believe that Sam Darnold is going to take us to the promised land this year. I believe it! I'm trusting and having faith.

Here's the thing about the Panthers...I wanna shoot it straight with you... the Panthers aren't great. They lose a lot and it's been a hard few years for us. I loved my boy Cam Newton, and then he fell off. And then we got Teddy last year and I thought Teddy was going to be our guy...that proved to not be true... and I've just sort of got accustomed to losing. It still hurts when we lose... don't get me wrong, but I'm used to it.

But y'all, lemme tell you...when the Panthers win... When the cardiac cats have pulled through for the dub, I'm calling up my friends, I'm calling up Memaw and Granddaddy, I'm sticking my head out the door and hooting and hollering, I'm telling everyone. I can't help it.

When we think about sharing Jesus with people this is kind of what it's like. Lemme explain.

You see, we share Jesus with people because of what Ephesians 2 says...By the way, this passage that I am about to read, this is the Gospel. Listen to this:

This is what Ephesians 2:1-3 says:

1 And you were **dead** in the trespasses and sins **2** in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience— **3** among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body[a] and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.[b]

You and I were DEAD in our trespasses and sins. We rejected the God who created us, who graciously gave us breath in our lungs, and who loves us with unconditional love...and instead of following this God, we chose to follow someone who actually hates God and hates us. And we were dead because of it. We were separated from God, and we were headed to Hell. God's wrath was rightfully upon us.

But that's not the end of the story. No, Paul goes on. Look at verses 4 through 7:

4 But[a] God, being **rich in mercy**, because of the **great love** with which he loved us, **5 even when we were dead** in our trespasses, **made us alive** together with Christ—**by grace you have been saved**— **6** and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, **7** so that in the

coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus.

Y'all!!! What?! This is incredible news! We have been redeemed and brought back to life in Christ. We did nothing to deserve it or earn it, it was a gift from God. Christ freely gave Himself up for us so that we could be brought back from death and reconciled to God through faith in Christ.

This is the Gospel that we share with people and there is no better news to ever tell anyone.

And so, back to my Panthers illustration, the reason I watch the Panthers is because I love them. And as believers we keep telling others about Jesus because He loved us and so as a response we LOVE him more than anything and we are in awe of what He's done for us on the cross. He has saved us and it's the highlight of our life.

It was the highlight of Paul's life. I'm not done with my Panthers illustration yet by the way.

Verse 4 says that every sabbath, his day off from his job of making tents, he would go to the synagogue to try and persuade Jews and Greeks...pretty convicting for me about how I take my days off...I'll say it. And then we see in verse 5 of what he was persuading them about.

It says, **5 When Silas and Timothy arrived from Macedonia, Paul was occupied with the word, testifying to the Jews that the Christ was Jesus. (Acts 18:5)**

Paul was telling them, “Y’all, this redeemer who you’ve been waiting for...the one who the entire Old Testament points to...It’s Jesus! Jesus is the suffering servant of Isaiah who has taken upon himself all of our iniquity and sins! Jesus is the Son of Man in Daniel 7 who is going to come on the clouds one day! Jesus is the one who Zechariah is pointing in chapter 14 when he says that the people will mourn over the one whom they have pierced!”

Paul was telling people about Jesus.

He had been redeemed by the blood of Christ. He had seen that Jesus is the Messiah. And he had to tell people.

And as he told them, what happened? Everyone came to Christ and they were glad that Paul had shared with them.

(Pause)

No. That’s not what the text says -- It says that he was **opposed** and **reviled** for it.

You see the reality is that the Gospel is offensive. It’s offensive because what it means is that everyone has a problem, and that problem is called sin... and we need a savior because that

sin has separated us from God and we can’t do anything on our own to bring ourselves back. And in our world, it’s offensive to tell anyone that they need anything! And so, as Paul told the Jews about Jesus, he was rejected.

Like Paul, as you tell people the Gospel, you may be rejected by people. You may even be thought of as a fool for telling people that you believe Jesus is the Savior of the world.

Some of you in here know exactly what I’m talking about and this is something that you have experienced. Maybe that’s been a really hard thing for you. If that’s you I just want to remind you that the Lord sees you. He loves you and is pleased with you... and He’s promised that there’s not an ounce of suffering that we go through that He won’t use for good. So, don’t lose heart. Be reminded of the love of Christ.

Here’s where the conclusion of my Panthers illustration comes. Like the Carolina Panthers, even when they lose over and over again, I’m still going back week after week after week watching them. It hurts when they lose. It’s painful. It makes me want to pull my hair out sometimes. But I keep going back. Why? Because like I said, I love them... But also, because I have an expectant heart that every time they step onto the field, they have a chance to win. And y’all, when my boys win...I forget about all the losses.

And y’all, when we see a brother or a sister hear the Gospel, submit their lives to Jesus, and be delivered from the domain

of darkness and transferred into the Kingdom of light, it makes all of the rejection that we might experience worth it.

When we are rejected for our faith in Christ, we don't lose hope. We keep pounding! We keep telling people about Jesus because we LOVE him and we believe that when His word goes out, it doesn't return void! We believe that God can change a life today and there is NO greater celebration than when we see someone say, "yes, I want to follow Jesus."

Luke 15:10 tells us that even the angels rejoice over one sinner who repents.

And so when we're rejected, we keep telling people about Jesus. We keep pounding.

This is exactly what we see Paul do. **Verses 6 and 7 in our Acts chapter says, 6 And when they opposed and reviled him, he shook out his garments and said to them, "Your blood be on your own heads! I am innocent. From now on I will go to the Gentiles." 7 And he left there and went to the house of a man named Titius Justus, a worshiper of God. His house was next door to the synagogue.**

Look at what Paul does here -- he gets rejected, and so he goes next door and starts sharing again!

He knew there were many in the city who were God's people. So even when though he was rejected, he kept sharing.

And like Paul, there are many people in our city, and so if we are going to live sent right here and right now, then we have to tell people about Jesus.

And my final point is this:

LIVING SENT MEANS HELPING PEOPLE TAKE THEIR NEXT STEPS

Verse 8 of our text says,

8 Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue, believed in the Lord, together with his entire household. And many of the Corinthians hearing Paul believed and were baptized. (Acts 18:8)

Just like I said, as we share the Gospel, God is faithful to save! Crispus, the ruler of the synagogue that Paul had just been pushed out of, heard the message of the Gospel and his eyes were opened and he believed. On top of that, the text says that many other Corinthians believed! I don't know the number, but the word "many" makes it seem like it was a lot of people.

God was moving through Paul telling people about Jesus. But God was also using Paul in another way as well. You see Paul wasn't just sharing the Gospel with people and then leaving them. No! He was discipling them. What we see from the text is that he showed these new believers a step that

they needed to take by being baptized...This is what we believe at Mercy...That as you believe in Jesus and surrender your life to Him, your next step should be getting baptized, which signifies that you have been buried with Christ into His death and then raised with him through faith in the powerful working of God, who raised Him from the dead (Colossians 2:12). Maybe this needs to be the next step that you take. We do baptisms every single month on the last Sunday of the month and we would love to walk with you through this process.

Paul was helping people take their next steps.

This is what we are called to do as believers. We are not called to make converts, we're called to make disciples.

Jesus says in His great commission, **"Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you..."** (Matthew 28:19-20)

If we are going to live sent right here, right now... If we are going to find these people whom God has chosen in our city, then we must help people take their next steps with Jesus.

Y'all, I know that this can sound like a tall task, and it really is. Helping people take their next steps with Jesus takes intentional thoughts, prayers, care, effort and time. Paul

stayed a year and six months with these people and so we can see from that alone that helping people take their next steps is a long-haul effort. And so as a church, we want to help you with understanding how to do this and support you as you do it. And we want to do that today.

So what we're going to do is right after this service is one of our new staff members, Sarah Wampler, is going to be leading a training on how to lead someone through a Discovery Bible Group. You saw a video for it right before the sermon started, and we're going to be training on it today. So I want to call each one of you to give 30 minutes of your Sunday to stay and to learn about how to lead one of your friends or family members through reading the Word of God in a really effective and simple way. This is an immediate step of obedience for you to live sent right here and right now, so text your friends and tell them you're going to be a little late to Chili's -- those chips and salsa ain't going anywhere! Stick around after the service and we'll help you learn what it means to help people take their next steps.

CLOSE

Here's how I want to close.

Look back at Acts 18:9-10. It says this: **9 And the Lord said to Paul one night in a vision, "Do not be afraid, but go on speaking and do not be silent, for I am with you, and no one**

will attack you to harm you, for I have many in this city who are my people.”

As you consider what I’ve spoken about today, let these words sink deep into your soul. The God of the universe says to Paul and he says to us that He is with us. Don’t be afraid. Don’t be afraid to put yourself out there for the sake of making Jesus known. Don’t be afraid of being rejected. Don’t be afraid of opening your home and using it for the sake of the Gospel. Don’t be afraid to make bold decisions for Jesus. Don’t be afraid of the trials and tribulations that are sure to come as we walk as lights in this dark world. Don’t be afraid. You’re not alone, God Himself goes with you as you do all of this.

He’s promised his presence with us. Earlier in the sermon, I mentioned the Great Commission and I intentionally left out the end, where Jesus says these words...

“And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age” – Matthew 28:20

The Lord is our strength and He’s our shield, He’s our refuge, He’s an ever-present help for us who never leaves us. And so brothers and sisters, we can trust that as we go and seek out these people whom God has chosen in our city, we’re not going alone. He is going with us. He is with us.

Invite band up and lead everyone through a time of reflection

^[1] Christ Centered Exposition: Exalting Jesus in Acts, Tony Merida, 263.

^[2] Ibid., 264

^[3] Ibid., 266