



Series: The Great Pursuit

Date: September 22, 2024

Speaker: Spence Shelton, Lead Pastor

Text: Isaiah 6

Title: Here I Am. Send Me.

Intro

Good Morning Mercy Family! I am so grateful to be worshipping our God here together with you! Our God is moving in our church.. If you are new today I want to say welcome. We've been praying for you and wanted this to be an introduction for you to who we are as a church. We just celebrated our 9th birthday here at Mercy. Happy Birthday Mercy Church!

The short story of our church is a group of people taking steps of faith - following God's Spirit as best we can - and the Lord blessing our faith-filled obedience. It

started with 60 people who believed it was a good idea to plant a church that would be laser focused on seeing a gospel awakening in the city of Charlotte carried to the ends of the earth. Make disciples who love God. love each other and love our world. Real simple. And the big idea today is that God will use a seemingly small step of faith in a really big way. I want to give a little evidence of that here at the start of my sermon so we are going to try something & see how it works. Can I get some lights up all around the room?

We've never had lights & sound like this. You come to Mercy next week it's a little...uhhh...more homey.

If you were there in 2015...you served in that early group of people who helped Mercy through those first few months would you stand up?

Invite early days members to stand up

That's not the only time this group has stepped out in faith to be sent out on God's great pursuit of the world. In fact each year for the past 5 years you've stepped out in faith to start a new work. Let me work backwards from this year. In 2024, you sent a small group with pastor Joseph Anderson to plant Kingdom City Church. **2024 - Kingdom City Church, Atlanta GA**

I went down to visit recently and pastor Joseph and the team are hard at work out sharing the gospel & building relationships in the community.



2023 - 64 of you stepped out in faith last year and launched a campus of mercy church to reach the people of UNION COUNTY! Union County Campus launch team stand up

2023 - Mercy Union County

2024 - Kingdom City Church, Atlanta GA

Now here's the thing - YOU took a step and in one year Mercy Union County has grown from 64 to right at 200 last weekend. If you attend the Union County Campus will you stand?

The year before that - 2022 - we sent our student pastor Allan & his family & 5 of our members to plant Mercy Nairobi.

2022 - Mercy Nairobi Nairobi, Kenya

2023 - Union County Campus

2024 - Kingdom City Church Atlanta, GA

Last Sunday there were 220 people attending, & 4 people gave their lives to Christ. They have seen over 55 people saved this year!

The year before that...in 2021 a launch team of 60 banded together to launch a campus of mercy church to reach the Northeast Area of our city. Because we are committed to reaching college students and that

includes those rowdy 49ers. Northeast Campus launch team stand up

2021 - Northeast Campus

2022 - Mercy Nairobi Nairobi, Kenya

2023 - Union County Campus

2024 - Kingdom City Church Atlanta, GA

Small Group of 60 planted it and last week some 360 people attended. If you attend northeast campus would you stand up? OK sit down

2020 - Tough Year

2019 - We took a big step to adopt an older church called Candlewyck Baptist Church and we moved from our temporary facility into our Providence Rd Campus. This was a powerful step of faith by a few older saints who believe what we believe. That God will ALWAYS bless steps of faith and no matter how stuck the situation may be, God will bless steps of faith.

2019 - Providence Rd Campus

2021 - Northeast Campus

2022 - Mercy Nairobi Nairobi, Kenya

2023 - Union County Campus

2024 - Kingdom City Church Atlanta, GA



I want to bring out 6 of the small group of members of Candlewyck baptist who took that step of faith. (SEND OUT THE 6) They are active wonderful members of Mercy Church. And I want us to see the way God can bless a step of faith. If you attend our Providence Rd campus - will you stand up?

This is the story of Mercy church. People taking steps of faith to see a gospel awakening happen in Charlotte carried to the ends of the earth and the Lord meeting us and providing for us and blessing us as we step out in faith. 60 people 9 years ago. Look around the room. So many lives changed and impacted by the step of faith taken by a few. That's how God works! It's how he has always worked and my message to you today is - God is not done working! He's still pursuing people and still going to use You and Me stepping out in faith to impact people for all eternity. If You are new with us, welcome aboard. We help people take their next step in following Jesus. Because we believe he's better than anything else this world has to offer. And our God is still pursuing people and still calling us to play a part in that pursuit. That's the emphasis of the sermon series we are entering into today. **The Great Pursuit. (Title Slide)**

Over the next 4 weeks in this mission of God series called the great pursuit we are going to survey 4 key

passages in the bible to see God's Great Pursuit of You & God's Great Pursuit of the WORLD through YOU

The God who loves the world and the people in it is pursuing them through his church so they might be lifted out of sin and reconciled to God. So we are going to talk about God's love for people and his plan to rescue them and our role in it. Who will go in 2025? 2026? 2027? As the Lord allows us, we are going to keep sending.

The next 4 sermons are going to be about our role in his pursuit and the handout you got shows you steps you can take to plug into the mission. That 50 by 2030 you see on your handout - We are asking God to let us send 50 people to be overseas missionaries by 2030. And it's gonna take the whole church to do it.

We are going to kick off the series in the first 8 verses of Isaiah 6. So if you have your bible make your way over there - Old Testament. If you are in Psalms go right a little bit. Skip past Song of Solomon that's a little too spicy for today. And you'll get to Isaiah. Pretty long book. and I have a really really simple main idea for us. It's a declaration each one of us must consider making and it's costly and it's voluntary and through it the gospel will reach the ends of the earth. It's the declaration of each person who stood because they



helped launch a campus or a church... The main idea is Isaiah's voluntary hand raised response to the Holiness & Grace of God

Here I am. Send Me.

That's the prayer we will build towards this morning. It's the prayer I am going to invite you to pray at the end of the sermon. But I doubt many of us want to pray that prayer. Because either fear or complacency or both keep us from it. We wouldn't own that but We might secretly want to pray a different version like Here I am.... ...and I'm pretty busy. I'm building my career and life right now. Here I am...and if you send me I'm gonna mess it up. In short I think if we had to pray this prayer right now for many of us a more sincere prayer would probably be - Here I am Lord..Send Somebody else. We don't WANT to pray it - because we don't want him to do it. We like the first part. We want the Lord to SEE US. "Here I am." We are good with that. We want him to acknowledge us & care for us but we don't want the disruption to our lives the Lord will bring to use us. In other words we want the Lord to see us and serve us but we are a little frightened & a little busy to go and serve him. BUT - I do think we want to impact lives. How do we overcome fear & complacency in our hearts to allow the Lord to use us to impact lives?

That's what makes this chapter of scripture so powerful. Because we don't start with Send me. Starts with something else entirely.

Let's walk through Isaiah 6. And if you are new that's what we do each week at Mercy. We walk through a passage of God's word together and see what he has for us in it. We do that to model for you a way you can read the bible at home and get something out of it. A Lot of people are intimidated by the bible so we try to make it accessible here. Just walk through it.

Outline: 4 moves your heart makes to be able to raise your hand and say HERE I AM. SEND ME. We start in Isaiah 6 verse 1. You guys ready?

In the year that King Uzziah died,

Ok stop right there. Context. Since we are jumping in. You need to know what is going on. According to 2 Chronicles Uzziah had a long & prosperous reign as king. He started out seeking God and God blessed him & the people BUT as he prospered...over time...he stopped seeking the Lord. 2 Chronicles 6 says he grew proud to his destruction. And when he died it was the end of an era for Israel. When Queen Elizabeth II died in 2022 - pretty much every news outlet called it the end of an era. In 100 years historians will look back on *when taylor swift died. It was the end of all the eras.*

But in Israel it marked a transfer of power taking place. And in the middle of that transfer of power where things circumstantially appear shaky, God is going to show Isaiah that the eternal throne is SECURE. Some of y'all need to see that today. Because things are shaky for you. But God is not shaky. He loves you and he's on the throne. That's the background. Next Isaiah describes a vision where he sees God.

I saw the Lord seated on a high and lofty throne, and the hem of his robe filled the temple.

2 Seraphim were standing above him; they each had six wings: with two they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. 3 And one called to another:

Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of Armies;

His glory fills the whole earth.

4 The foundations of the doorways shook at the sound of their voices, and the temple was filled with smoke.

This is wild right? A glimpse into the throneroom of heaven. Seraphim are like angels. Whose voices are so powerful they shake the room with their praise. And even these incredible beings are using their extra wings to shield their faces & feet from God's glory that they are unworthy of. And that is why they cry out HOLY HOLY HOLY. HE is holy. And just like the hem of

his robe filled the temple so his glory fills the earth. It's awe inspiring. It's amazing.

And here's why this matters. It is only after Isaiah SEES God that he volunteers to GO for God. And the same is true for us. I believe we won't live for God until we first see God. My conviction and the reason we preach the way we do here is that ANY movement in your heart & soul is going to start with SEEING GOD for who he really is. A.W. Tozer said the most important thing about a church is what it thinks about God. How big & holy is God to you? Are you in AWE of your God?

The book of Job ends with God, for a few chapters, declaring his all surpassing power & glory to Job because Job & his friends had forgotten who they were complaining to. They had forgotten the GLORY of God. So he says "Where were you when I established the earth?" "Who put the seas in their place, gave boundaries to the clouds, and tells the morning when to rise?" "Can you loosen Orion's belt or create lightning and tell it where to go?"

You and I may not be in the throne room of heaven, and God may not be talking to us from a cloud, but Psalm 19 says the HEAVENS DECLARE THE GLORY OF GOD & THE SKY ABOVE PROCLAIMS HIS HANDIWORK. Day to day pours out speech and night to night reveals

knowledge. In other words...EARTH is declaring his glory too! And then psalm 19 says the law of the lord is perfect...reviving the soul. You see God's glory in his creation but also in his word!

Listen, you gotta read his word. Not because it's a spiritual check mark on your resume but because you will ENCOUNTER THE LIVING GOD in there. God is Holy. And when you encounter the living HOLY God...you will have a revolution of the soul.

COPERNICAN REVOLUTION OF THE SOUL

- From earth being the center of SOLAR SYSTEM to the Sun.

Have you had that revolution? If not...THAT is what you need. See Isaiah already believed in God. We Christians in the room do too. Maybe many of you who are not Christians believe in God. But what happens to Isaiah is a revolution where God moves from an idea to a weighty reality. From something orbiting around him...to something he orbited around. Something now at the center of his life. God becomes the most consequential reality in life. That is a revolution of the soul. And we each need it.

Because anything else in the center of your solar system...ultimately will let you down. That's what I'm

praying for you. To see God rightly and declare him holy & glorious. You will never GO FOR God...You will never raise your hand and say SEND ME until you first SEE GOD rightly. and when you see him rightly you'll respond just like the seraphim.

First move of the heart: God you are glorious!

When you do, You'll say He's glorious and powerful and HOLY. And you'll accept that you are not the center of his solar system, he is the center of yours. Leads right to the second move. Just watch Isaiah's reaction in verse 5.

5 Then I said: Woe is me for I am ruined because I am a man of unclean lips and live among a people of unclean lips, and because my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Armies.

Isaiah says I am ruined for two reasons. I'm unclean. Meaning - I'm im-pure. I lack perfection. The Bible's words for this are - I'm a sinner. My sin - which is where I disobey God. I break his commands or just choose my way over his way. In comparison to the GLORY of the King, the Lord of Armies...I am unclean. And because I've seen him...I'm ruined. I'm so undeserving of being in the presence of the Lord his glory may outright kill me. I've walked into the holy throne room into the

presence of the holiest being ever and I'm unworthy. I'm a sinner.

Listen when you see God rightly, you will see yourself rightly. And THAT will lead to confession. Woe is me, I am unclean. Do you believe you are a sinner? And here's the harder one - do you believe your sin makes you unworthy of being in the presence of God?

Kind of like my son's soccer cleats right now. Peak soccer season. And I think he would be the first to admit YEAH, my cleats are dirty and they don't smell great. But listen...the other day he brought them in the house and they smelled SO BAD those of us several feet away started gagging. Like...THEY ARE WAY WORSE THAN YOU REALIZE MAN!! You've just gotten used to it.

That's what sin does to the heart. We think something like...I know I'm not perfect but I'm not that bad. The reality is we are WAY worse off than we realize. The gospel says the wage of your sin is death. We think...that's harsh. No, you just don't see the holiness of God and you've gotten comfortable with your sin. You don't see how egregious your rebellion is against A HOLY GOD! But that's what happens when you see him rightly

Second move of the heart: God I am unworthy!

That's Isaiah. He recognizes he is not worthy of the presence of God. And that makes him a candidate for God's amazing grace. Listen to me - Sinners are the one and only candidates for grace. If you are not a sinner, you don't need grace. You don't need God. Sinners need God. Watch what God does

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me, and in his hand was a glowing coal that he had taken from the altar with tongs.

By the way the seraphim doesn't use tongs because this coal is too hot. Seraphim are made of fire. It's not heat that makes the coal untouchable. It's HOLINESS. The coal is glowing with heat yes but it's glowing with the heat of the holiness of the altar of God. And the angel is unworthy to touch it. BUT...somehow God decrees Isaiah can be touched by the holy coal of the altar.

7 He touched my mouth with it and said: Now that this has touched your lips, your iniquity is removed and your sin is atoned for.

Isaiah said I am a man of unclean lips and then God touched his mouth. And makes an amazing declaration. The HOLINESS of God has removed his

iniquity. God's grace has come down to him and atoned for his sin. And grace is represented as holy fire. We get in God's presence and recognize our sinfulness and need for God's grace and then God's holy fire of grace comes down to us...and it takes away our sin.

See in our world when something clean touches something unclean...the unclean thing...the dirty thing...defiles the clean thing. Dirty shoes make clean carpet dirty. But here, God's holiness makes Isaiah clean! Isaiah doesn't contaminate God, God cleanses Isaiah.

And I want you to hear something. This is a foreshadowing of the gospel message. That says you and I are each like Isaiah. Woe are we. Because we, like Isaiah & Israel are sinful people. And when you recognize your sin the POWERFUL MESSAGE OF THE GOSPEL IS...Instead of wrath & judgment pouring down on you consuming you for your sin...Instead God sends down his holy fire of Grace - atonement through Jesus. Which is a word that literally means covered. Your sins are COVERED. Your sin is like a debt you owed and God says I have covered your debt. Taken it away. How? Well it came at great cost.

16 For God loved the world in this way: He gave his one and only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. -- John 3:16

Your sin has been atoned for by God, who Hebrews says is an all consuming fire. Who sent his son from his heavenly throne to pay for your sin and mine. But we must receive it. Not everyone will have eternal life with the Lord...only those who believe.

Third move of the heart: God I believe Jesus paid for my sins!

That's the move some of you need to make today. You don't need to go for God, you need to receive from God. See when you believe that the holy, entirely other God...poured out forgiveness and new life onto you who didn't deserve it from his throne...then your instinct will be...whatever you ask, I'll do.

**8 Then I heard the voice of the Lord asking:
Who will I send? Who will go for us?
I said: Here I am. Send me.**

In light of your HOLINESS...here I am. Send me. In light of your mercy poured out on my sinfulness...here I am, send me. In light of the grace of you paying a debt I could never pay...here I am, send me. See Isaiah doesn't wait to hear the assignment. He doesn't say...depending on where you want me to go...send me. No, he believes this God is worthy of his unconditional allegiance. TRUSTS that THIS GOD is SO GOOD. That



whatever assignment he calls him to will be GOOD for him. Whether it's hard for him or not.

Fourth heart move: God here I am. Send me.

God you are holy, I'm a sinner, I believe Jesus paid for my sins & gives me new life in him... so here I am, send me. Too much of Christianity has missed this fourth move and missed out on the greatest purpose they could give their lives to. This series is about God's great pursuit of you and God's great pursuit of the world THROUGH you. He has designed us to be his means by which the world hears. It starts with raising our hand in the little things right here.

12 months ago we were out of room at Mercy so we said guys our God is worthy of our sacrifice. So Here I am. Send me - meant adding a worship service to Providence Rd and to Northeast campuses and the Union County launch team said here I am. Send me and launched two services to reach their community. As a result, Mercy church that was at its capacity somehow grew by 32%, saw 877 first time guests, 79 people baptized, all while creating space so that 80% of our weekend worship attenders are participating in the discipleship ministries of our church! PRAISE GOD!

That's a small step. And here at home we'll keep asking you to take steps to sacrifice Sunday morning

convenience, sacrifice your money, to sacrifice your time by serving because God is worthy and he's got a mission for us. But listen, we are also going to keep calling you to the nations.

We have several prayers for Mercy over the next 5 years I'm going to be sharing next year but one of those is that God would allow us to send 50 missionaries to the nations by 2030. 50 of you to say Here I am. Send me. I genuinely believe he's been cultivating, stirring, preparing many of you for that.

And listen I need you to understand I get the weightiness of that prayer. I get that I have a 16 year old now. In 2029 he will be 21. I don't know if God will call him or my other children but what I'm saying is...I gotta be ready to pray this prayer, I gotta be ready for my wife to pray this prayer, for my kids to pray this prayer. You gotta be ready for your friend, your roommate, your community group leader...We gotta be ready for some gospel goodbyes and in our hearts say GOD IS GLORIOUS AND HIS LOVE REACHING THE WORLD IS WORTH IT! HERE WE ARE LORD SEND US!

For all of us - just as an exercise - let's pray this prayer over the next month. Here I am. Send me. Maybe God will send you to a family member. Maybe to your neighbor. I want you to write down the name of one person that if you raise your hand...here I am send



me...you think yeah it's probably to that person. Write their name down & start praying. Over the course of this month I want you to pray for that one person every day. Maybe you need, I know this sounds bizarre...but maybe you need to visualize your own name right there in that blank. IF THAT'S YOU...If you are thinking Lord I NEED you to save me. You can receive his forgiveness TODAY.

On the other side of that card is a next step blank. Listen, this is for you. We aren't taking this up or anything.

Maybe your next step is - I'm going to take this mission of God class and learn about where God is sending his people right now. I'm going to put my yes on the table and just learn. It's like our starting point for missions. We've got a bunch of short term trips planned for next year. One of which Courtney and I will be leading over to Germany & our church plant there and man we want you to come. Details coming later. Maybe you are seeking & new to the faith & your next step is just - Lord I will be at church these next 4 weeks to hear what you have to say. You write down - go to church 4 weeks straight.

Here's how I want to land - Let's take a moment and respond together. I want to lead you in a time of prayer & response. All together.
SALVATION & SENDING
flashlight?

END OF SERMON - COMMUNION