

REDEEMING QUALITIES: Learning to Share Our Mission



Send

SEND SILENCE: NOT AN OPTION!

As we begin the last three weeks of this study, it is important to remember that it is the Holy Spirit who sends. We simply respond to His promptings. Let's be careful never to fall into the trap of thinking we have the power to go out into the world under our own strength. The power that sends us out and strengthens us to fulfill God's mission is a Divine attribute that we are incapable of creating.

Preschool children enjoy days of "Show and Tell," excited to have the opportunity to share something of significance with their classmates. As we grow older, we tend to shy away from such sharing – concerned that we might offend others or that we might be looked down upon, misinterpreted, or ridiculed. God's Word, however, mandates that we cultivate the spiritual practice of witness. Throughout Scripture, we read, "Go and tell. Show what He has done!"

We begin this section by exploring some ancient passages of Scripture in which God clearly teaches us that we do not outgrow the days of "Show and Tell."

Let's look first at a portion of *David's Song of Praise* recorded in the 16th chapter of 1 Chronicles.

- ◆ As you read this song written approximately 430 years before the birth of Christ, make note of God's mandate to share the Good News.
1 Chronicles 16:8-13, 23-24, 31

⁸ **Give thanks to the LORD and proclaim his greatness.**

Let the whole world know what he has done.

⁹ **Sing to him; yes, sing his praises.**

Tell everyone about his wonderful deeds.

¹⁰ **Exult in his holy name;**

rejoice, you who worship the LORD.

¹¹ **Search for the LORD and for his strength;**

continually seek him.

¹² **Remember the wonders he has performed,**

his miracles, and the rulings he has given,

¹³ **you children of his servant Israel,**

you descendants of Jacob, his chosen ones.

²³ **Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!**

Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.

²⁴ **Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.**

Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

**³¹ Let the heavens be glad, and the earth rejoice!
Tell all the nations, “The LORD reigns!”**

- ◆ Review the things you noted in this passage about sharing the Good News. See if you can identify how they fit into four important elements of gratitude and thanksgiving that David uncovers in this song: 1) remembering what God has done; 2) telling others about it; 3) showing God’s glory to others; and 4) offering gifts of self, time, and resources.
- ◆ When we are truly thankful, we readily recognize and accept God’s grace. Then, having accepted it, we naturally want to respond. Write down specific examples of how your everyday life shows evidence of this level of gratitude?

The passage above parallels several Psalms. Let’s now explore three of them.

Psalm 30:11-12

**¹¹You have turned my mourning into joyful dancing.
You have taken away my clothes of mourning
and clothed me with joy,
¹²that I might sing praises to you and not be silent.
O LORD my God, I will give you thanks forever!**

Psalm 96:1-3, 10

**¹Sing a new song to the LORD!
Let the whole earth sing to the LORD!
²Sing to the LORD; praise his name.
Each day proclaim the good news that he saves.
³Publish his glorious deeds among the nations.
Tell everyone about the amazing things he does.

¹⁰Tell all the nations, “The LORD reigns!”
The world stands firm and cannot be shaken.
He will judge all peoples fairly.**

*⁷“... blessed are those
who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD
their hope and confidence.
⁸They are like trees
planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach
deep into the water.
Such trees are not
bothered by the heat
or worried by long months
of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop
producing fruit.”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)*



Psalm 107:1-2, 31-32

¹**Give thanks to the LORD, for he is good!**

His faithful love endures forever.

²**Has the LORD redeemed you? Then speak out!**

Tell others he has redeemed you from your enemies.

³¹**Let them praise the LORD for his great love
and for the wonderful things he has done for them.**

³²**Let them exalt him publicly before the congregation
and before the leaders of the nation.**

- ◆ What word or phrase stands out for you as you read these passages from the Book of Psalms? Write that word or phrase on an index card and keep it in a prominent place this week. Ask God for revelation and guidance as you begin to hear His call to “go and tell.”

- ◆ Psalm 107:2 highlights an important aspect of witness. In what specific areas has God redeemed you from your enemies? How is God calling you to share your story of redemption?

- ✚ Redeemer Lutheran Church – The very name of your congregation speaks out, proclaiming the transformative power of God’s redemption. Pray this week for the boldness to share that message outside the walls of your building. Write down how you think God might be guiding and directing you as you respond to His call.

We continue this week's study with a look at three passages from the book of Isaiah.

- ◆ As you read Chapter 6 (Isaiah's Cleansing and Call), make note of God's grace and Isaiah's response:

Isaiah 6:1-8

¹ It was in the year King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord. He was sitting on a lofty throne, and the train of his robe filled the Temple. ²Attending him were mighty seraphim, each having six wings. With two wings they covered their faces, with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. ³They were calling out to each other,

“Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of Heaven's Armies!
The whole earth is filled with his glory!”

⁴ Their voices shook the Temple to its foundations, and the entire building was filled with smoke.

⁵ Then I said, “It's all over! I am doomed, for I am a sinful man. I have filthy lips, and I live among a people with filthy lips. Yet I have seen the King, the LORD of Heaven's Armies.” ⁶ Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal he had taken from the altar with a pair of tongs. ⁷ He touched my lips with it and said, “See, this coal has touched your lips. Now your guilt is removed, and your sins are forgiven.”

⁸ Then I heard the Lord asking, “Whom should I send as a messenger to this people? Who will go for us?”

I said, “Here I am. Send me.”

- ◆ Isaiah's vision of God's majesty overwhelmed him as he realized that, under his own power, he had no hope of measuring up to God's standard of holiness. What is your typical response when you become overwhelmed?

Isaiah's response to being overwhelmed was to speak directly to God, honestly sharing his feelings and his thoughts – and humbly confessing his sin. Thus, his spirit was open to receiving yet another measure of God's grace – complete, total forgiveness!

- ◆ Upon receiving God's cleansing grace, Isaiah submitted himself entirely to God's service. How does Isaiah's response speak to you personally today? What significance does it have to the Church today? What relevance does it have to Redeemer, Gastonia?

As Isaiah carried out his call, we read his prophetic words of the Messiah's coming. . .
Isaiah 12:4-6

**⁴In that wonderful day you will sing:
"Thank the LORD! Praise his name!
Tell the nations what he has done.
Let them know how mighty he is!
⁵Sing to the LORD, for he has done wonderful things.
Make known his praise around the world.
⁶Let all the people of Jerusalem shout his praise with joy!
For great is the Holy One of Israel who lives among you."**

- ◆ Isaiah praised, preached, shouted, and sang after the coals of forgiveness touched his lips. In what areas do you need God's forgiveness to open your lips, breaking your silence?
- ◆ Will Isaiah's words change anything about how you think and how you live this week? If so, describe that change in specific terms, and share it with at least one person in your group. If not, ask your prayer partner to help you identify the barrier that prevents such growth from taking place.

Isaiah's experience clearly shows us that growth continues even as we are being sent. When God sends us out, it is a permanent call to share the Good News. Silence ceases to be an option for us.

The prophet continues . . .
Isaiah 62:1-7

**Because I love Zion,
I will not keep still.
Because my heart yearns for Jerusalem,
I cannot remain silent.
I will not stop praying for her
until her righteousness shines like the dawn,
and her salvation blazes like a burning torch.
² The nations will see your righteousness.
World leaders will be blinded by your glory.
And you will be given a new name
by the LORD's own mouth.
³ The LORD will hold you in his hand for all to see—
a splendid crown in the hand of God.
⁴ Never again will you be called "The Forsaken City"
or "The Desolate Land."
Your new name will be "The City of God's Delight"
and "The Bride of God,"
for the LORD delights in you
and will claim you as his bride.
⁵ Your children will commit themselves to you, O Jerusalem,
just as a young man commits himself to his bride.
Then God will rejoice over you
as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride.
⁶ O Jerusalem, I have posted watchmen on your walls;
they will pray day and night, continually.
Take no rest, all you who pray to the LORD.
⁷ Give the LORD no rest until he completes his work,
until he makes Jerusalem the pride of the earth.**

⁷ "... blessed are those
who trust in the LORD
and have made the LORD
their hope and confidence.
⁸ They are like trees
planted along a riverbank,
with roots that reach
deep into the water.
Such trees are not
bothered by the heat
or worried by long months
of drought.
Their leaves stay green,
and they never stop
producing fruit."
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)

Isaiah's unceasing prayer and his zeal for God's will to be accomplished are evident in this passage. If we are honest, we must admit that we often pray the words, "Thy Kingdom come; thy will be done," on auto-pilot or on cruise control.

- ◆ Are you ready to pray passionately for God to teach your heart to yearn for His will above all else? Write down thoughts and feelings that surface when you consider this bold action.

- ◆ How do Isaiah's words, "I will not keep still. . . I cannot remain silent," echo in your heart, mind, and spirit?

Are you beginning to see that welcome, grow, and send are not separate, stand-alone actions? They fit together, describing the mission of your congregation.

Re-read Isaiah's words, and let them help you integrate WELCOME, GROW, and SEND.

- ◆ WELCOME: What welcome in your heart, mind, and spirit do you give to these words written nearly 700 years before Christ's birth?

- ◆ GROW: How do you allow these words to take root, grow, and have relevance in your life and in your relationships?

- ◆ SEND: How do you recognize God's call and respond, "Here I am. Send me," submitting to and accepting His reign in your life, in your family, in your community, in your congregation, in the world? And how do you unashamedly proclaim God's redemptive work?



SEND

PRIVATE FAITH: NOT AN OPTION

In our culture today, faith is often looked upon as a private matter; however, that view is not consistent with what we see throughout Scripture. Without a doubt, faith involves a personal relationship with God and with fellow believers – so faith is, indeed, personal. Personal, however, does not mean private.

We open this week’s study with a few of Jesus’ words from what has become known as the Sermon on the Mount. . .

Matthew 5:13-16

¹³“You are the salt of the earth. But what good is salt if it has lost its flavor? Can you make it salty again? It will be thrown out and trampled underfoot as worthless.

¹⁴“You are the light of the world—like a city on a hilltop that cannot be hidden. ¹⁵No one lights a lamp and then puts it under a basket. Instead, a lamp is placed on a stand, where it gives light to everyone in the house. ¹⁶In the same way, let your good deeds shine out for all to see, so that everyone will praise your heavenly Father.

✚ If we make no effort to affect the world around us; if we blend in with everyone else; if our response to receiving the Good News is to keep it private, we have lost our “saltiness.” Just as seasoning brings out the best flavors in food, Jesus is calling us to positively affect the world. Take some time to rate your seasoning quality this week, asking God and your prayer partner for help in your assessment.

◆ What is your initial response when you hear Jesus, the Light of the World, using those very words to describe you?

It is impossible for a city of lights on a hilltop to be hidden by its surrounding darkness. Think of driving through McAdenville on a December evening. The darkness of the night sky cannot possibly hide the lights of this “Christmas town.” It would make no sense for residents to construct a wall around each house, tree, and street post to obstruct the light, yet that is precisely what we tend to do in our lives.

When we live for Christ, our lives naturally glow, showing others the person and character of Jesus. However, we have numerous excuses and reasons for carefully constructing obstacles to block our light from the world – to “privatize” our faith. A few common barriers include the following:

- Being silent when we know we should speak
- Denying the truth that we are light
- Ignoring the needs of others
- Justifying a sinful action

There are innumerable others. Our barrier-construction process is so well practiced that we do it without thought or planning. As we grow in our relationship with Jesus and with fellow believers – and as we prepare to be sent out – it is imperative that we take an honest look at the barriers we construct, and that we seek God’s help in taking those barriers down.

- ◆ Don’t delay, and don’t be afraid. Remember – no darkness has the power to hide the light of Christ!

Pray now for God’s guidance to help you dismantle any barriers you have erected to block His light. If you don’t know where to begin, use the template below to get started.

Merciful God, I confess that I have constructed barriers to hide Your light from the world. *[Specifically name your barriers as well as any thought processes or feelings that led you to construct the barrier.]*

Forgive me, I pray. I want to take the barriers down. I want Your light to shine through me. *[Include specific avenues, ways, circumstances, reasons, etc.]*

Trusting in Your forgiveness, grace, mercy, and healing, I ask You to help me destroy anything that obstructs Your light. *[Write down how you believe God will help and guide you through this process.]*

Thank You, Jesus, for the conviction of Your words. I want to follow Your direction and align my will with Yours. Thank You for. . .

Amen

We continue our study this week with Paul's counsel to the church in Corinth (and to us) about the importance of faith-sharing.

- ◆ As you read, mark any connections you see between welcoming, growing, and sending.

Paul begins with some background and a general lesson on faith sharing . . .
2 Corinthians 3:12-18

¹² Since [God's new covenant] gives us such confidence, we can be very bold. ¹³ We are not like Moses, who put a veil over his face so the people of Israel would not see the glory, even though it was destined to fade away. ¹⁴ But the people's minds were hardened, and to this day whenever the old covenant is being read, the same veil covers their minds so they cannot understand the truth. And this veil can be removed only by

⁷ "... blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence. ⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit." (Jeremiah 17:7-8)

believing in Christ. ¹⁵ Yes, even today when they read Moses' writings, their hearts are covered with that veil, and they do not understand.

¹⁶ But whenever someone turns to the Lord, the veil is taken away.

¹⁷ For the Lord is the Spirit, and wherever the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. ¹⁸ So all of us who have had that veil removed can see and reflect the glory of the Lord. And the Lord—who is the Spirit—makes us more and more like him as we are changed into his glorious image.

- ◆ What evidence do you see of God's glory in your daily life? How is that reflected through you?

- ◆ In the passage above, identify as many examples as you can of:

- God's welcome
- God's teaching
- God's call to share
- Human response

Paul continues with specifics about sharing the Good News. . .
2 Corinthians 4:1-2, 6-7

¹Therefore, since God in his mercy has given us this new way, we never give up. ² We reject all shameful deeds and underhanded methods. We don't try to trick anyone or distort the word of God. We tell the truth before God, and all who are honest know this.

⁶For God, who said, "Let there be light in the darkness," has made this light shine in our hearts so we could know the glory of God that is seen in the face of Jesus Christ.

⁷We now have this light shining in our hearts, but we ourselves are like fragile clay jars containing this great treasure. This makes it clear that our great power is from God, not from ourselves.



- ✚ What examples of welcoming, growing, and sending do you notice in these verses? And there's that word "light" again – along with an example of grace and response! Share your insights with your prayer partner.

- ◆ Do you find it amazing that God would entrust the supremely valuable message of salvation in Jesus Christ to frail, fallible, fickle humans? That reality alone is an example of God's grace if there ever was one! What is your response to such grace?

- ◆ Rather than focusing on the fragility of the clay jars, Paul challenges us to shift our focus to the priceless contents of the jars – God's power dwelling in us! God is completely and entirely aware of our limitations, yet He chooses to use us as vessels through which the world can see Him! What thoughts and feelings surface as you re-read verse 7?

Paul's lesson is not over. . .
2 Corinthians 4:8-16

⁸ We are pressed on every side by troubles, but we are not crushed. We are perplexed, but not driven to despair. ⁹ We are hunted down, but never abandoned by God. We get knocked down, but we are not destroyed. ¹⁰ Through suffering, our bodies continue to share in the death of Jesus so that the life of Jesus may also be seen in our bodies.

¹¹ Yes, we live under constant danger of death because we serve Jesus, so that the life of Jesus will be evident in our dying bodies. ¹² So we live in the face of death, but this has resulted in eternal life for you.

¹³ But we continue to preach because we have the same kind of faith the psalmist had when he said, "I believed in God, so I spoke." ¹⁴ We know that God, who raised the Lord Jesus, will also raise us with Jesus and present us to himself together with you. ¹⁵ All of this is for your benefit.

And as God's grace reaches more and more people, there will be great thanksgiving, and God will receive more and more glory.

¹⁶That is why we never give up. Though our bodies are dying, our spirits are being renewed every day.

As this chapter concludes, Paul reminds us that even though our perishable bodies are subject to sin and suffering, God never abandons us. If we believe this truth, situations, circumstances, and feelings are no longer valid excuses to step away from our calling to share the Good News. Such difficulties actually provide opportunities for Christ to demonstrate His power and presence in and through us. (Does this sound familiar? See 2 Corinthians 1:3-11 from Week 5.)

- ◆ How does Paul's counsel to the Corinthians challenge you personally?

- ◆ How does Paul's counsel challenge your congregation?

- ◆ What comfort and assurance does Paul give you?

- ◆ What examples of grace and response do you see in Paul's counsel?

SEND PASSIVE RESPONSE: NOT AN OPTION

As we conclude our study, we read some of the last words that Jesus spoke to His disciples before going to sit at His Father's right hand.

John 15:16-17, 26-27

¹⁶ You didn't choose me. I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit, so that the Father will give you whatever you ask for, using my name. ¹⁷ This is my command: Love each other.

²⁶ "But I will send you the Advocate—the Spirit of truth. He will come to you from the Father and will testify all about me. ²⁷ And you must also testify about me because you have been with me from the beginning of my ministry.

Jesus is clear. He chose first. He chose to love us, to die for us, and to invite us to live with Him forever. The next choice is ours – to go and produce lasting fruit and testify about Him, or to reject His appointment and mandate. Without His choice, we would have no choice to make – but He did, and therefore, we do.

- ◆ Make a pro and con list of the two choices Jesus gives us, mindful that both choices have a cost. We must choose one or the other. Be aware – if you do not make an active choice to accept, your passive response will signal your choice to reject.

It is important to know precisely (and concisely) why you make the choice you make. This choice is the basis for your personal faith statement.

- ✚ Write thoughts that come to mind, and make a commitment to work with your prayer partner to create and fine-tune your statement. An affirmative response to God's call will, without doubt, require you to articulate your faith statement.

In the passage above, Jesus uses two names for the Holy Spirit: “Advocate” and “Spirit of Truth.” This is a beautiful illustration of the Holy Spirit’s ministry to our minds as well as to our hearts. “Advocate” conveys the helping, encouraging, strengthening work of the Spirit; “Spirit of Truth” conveys the Spirit’s role in teaching, illuminating, and guiding.

- ◆ In which dimension are you more likely to recognize and receive the ministry of the Holy Spirit as you prepare to be sent out?

- ◆ How can you, as part of Redeemer, Gastonia, help people within the congregation and in the community to recognize the Holy Spirit’s work as both Advocate and Spirit of Truth?

After Jesus’ death and resurrection. . .
Matthew 28:1-10

¹ Early on Sunday morning, as the new day was dawning, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary went out to visit the tomb.

² Suddenly there was a great earthquake! For an angel of the Lord came down from heaven, rolled aside the stone, and sat on it. ³ His face shone like lightning, and his clothing was as white as snow. ⁴ The guards shook with fear when they saw him, and they fell into a dead faint.

⁵ Then the angel spoke to the women. “Don’t be afraid!” he said. “I know you are looking for Jesus, who was crucified. ⁶ He isn’t here! He is risen from the dead, just as he said would happen. Come, see where his body was lying. ⁷ And now, go quickly and tell his disciples that he has risen from the dead, and he is going ahead of you to Galilee. You will see him there. Remember what I have told you.”

⁸ The women ran quickly from the tomb. They were very frightened but also filled with great joy, and they rushed to give the disciples the angel’s message. ⁹ And as they went, Jesus met them and greeted them.

And they ran to him, grasped his feet, and worshiped him. ¹⁰ Then Jesus said to them, “Don’t be afraid! Go tell my brothers to leave for Galilee, and they will see me there.”

It’s easy to think we know this story and to skim through it. If that is what you did, go back and read carefully! In these ten verses, both an angel and Jesus Himself send these women out to share the Good News, and both convey a level of urgency – with no option of passivity

You have heard the resurrection story – with its mandates. And throughout this section of study, you have seen those very words repeated throughout Scripture. “Go quickly and tell . . . Go tell my brothers . . .” The message is for us today.

The women obviously accepted their call, as did the eleven disciples. . .
Matthew 28:16-20

¹⁶ Then the eleven disciples left for Galilee, going to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. ¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him—but some of them doubted!

¹⁸ Jesus came and told his disciples, “I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. ¹⁹ Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. ²⁰ Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

- ◆ This is another familiar passage. Read it carefully. What elements of welcome, growth, and being sent do you recognize? What grace do you see offered?

- ◆ Jesus is clear. Silence is not an option. Private faith is not an option. Passive response is not an option. Go. Make. Baptize. Teach. How will Redeemer, Gastonia respond to Jesus’ words?

⁷ “... blessed are those who trust in the LORD and have made the LORD their hope and confidence.

*⁸ They are like trees planted along a riverbank, with roots that reach deep into the water. Such trees are not bothered by the heat or worried by long months of drought. Their leaves stay green, and they never stop producing fruit.”
(Jeremiah 17:7-8)*

In case we missed His words during His last week on earth – and His words to the women after His resurrection – and His words to His disciples in Galilee, Jesus speaks again as He ascends to heaven. . .

Acts 1:8

⁸You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses, telling people about me everywhere—in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

- ◆ When you read Jesus’ parting words: “You will receive . . . you will be . . . [you will] tell,” what affirmation, encouragement, and challenge is Jesus presenting to you?

- ◆ It’s time to go all in and all out. It’s time to step up and stand firm. It’s time to believe that Jesus is who He says He is, and to share it. Jesus is calling you. What is your response?



⁶Just as you accepted Christ Jesus as your Lord, you must continue to follow him. ⁷Let your roots grow down into Him, and let your lives be built on Him. Then your faith will grow strong in the truth you were taught, and you will overflow with thankfulness. Let the message about Christ, in all its richness, fill your lives. Teach and counsel each other with all the wisdom he gives. Sing psalms and songs to God with thankful hearts.

(Colossians 2:6-7)

As you conclude this nine-week study, it is important for you to know that you are not finished! Take a moment to look back at the introduction to this study – you have become part of an unending cycle. God will continue pouring out His grace as He welcomes, grows, and sends you; and you will continue responding with thanksgiving and obedience to His call. It is important for you to create action steps and arrange for accountability as you continue living this cycle.

- ◆ Make note of specific truths and insights regarding the WELCOME – GROW – SEND cycle that God has placed in your mind and on your heart over the past nine weeks.

- ◆ Indicate, with specificity, how you plan to respond to these truths and insights.

- ✝ Contact your prayer partner. Share what you have noted above, pray together, and set a time to regularly meet as you continue to grow in your response to God's grace.

Referring back to the introduction again, review the section about spiritual disciplines.

- ◆ Have you grown in any of the three disciplines listed? If so, write down specific examples of your growth. If not, write down what you think blocked growth from happening?

- ✝ How do you plan to nurture growth in your spiritual disciplines? Share your plan with your prayer partner, and agree to encourage each other and to provide an avenue of accountability with each other.

In closing, I thank you for the opportunity to write this study for you, and I lift you into the presence of the Holy – paraphrasing Paul’s prayer for the believers in Philippi, as recorded in the 1st chapter of Philippians.

Every time I think of you, I give thanks to God. When I pray, I make my requests for all of you with joy, for you are my partners in spreading the Good News about Jesus Christ. And I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue His work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

So it is right that I should feel as I do about all of you, for you have a special place in my heart. You share with me the special favor of God in defending and confirming the truth of the Good News.

I pray that your love will overflow more and more, and that you will keep on growing in knowledge and understanding. For I want you to understand what really matters, so that you may live pure and blameless lives until the day of Christ’s return.

May you always be filled with the fruit of your salvation – the righteous character produced in your life by Jesus Christ – for this will bring much glory and praise to God. Amen.

May God richly bless each of you – and the entire congregation of The Lutheran Church of the Redeemer in Gastonia, North Carolina.

Peace,

Candice

