



# New Day Church

Need a fresh start?

## SENDING SPREE

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Saudi Arabia is probably on the list of places I am least likely to visit, given the travel advisories of the government and my aversion to burning hot sand. But if I ever did go there, I would be sure to go to the town of Jeddah on the Red Sea. Because I would love to see King Fahd's fountain, which is the tallest fountain in the world. On a calm day, it shoots a plume of water 1,024 feet in the air. That's taller than the Eiffel Tower. Get this: At any given moment, the amount of water in the air weighs 36,000 lbs and travels at 233 miles an hour! Not really the kind of fountain you want to splash around in, but it is a spectacular sight.

The even more spectacular part is what you don't see – the engineering behind it. The whole thing took years to design and develop. Hidden underwater is a five story structure that houses the massive pumps to keep things going. The fountain uses salt water from the Red Sea instead of fresh water, so the design had to factor in corrosion and abrasion on all the parts. A series of filters remove sand and organic material from the water as it moves along. They actually had to create their own unique alloy for the nozzles to survive the pressure and velocity of the water. And the whole thing is subject to daily, weekly, biweekly, monthly, quarterly and annual inspections.

It's paid off: The fountain has been operating continuously for more than 20 years with no major interruptions. And all the public sees is the beauty of the fountain itself.

Think of New Day as being like that fountain. Our vision is to build a worshipping community of all kinds of people that will be a living testimony to the power of the gospel and the reality of God's kingdom. That is a spectacular view that would be great to see.

In order for that to happen, it takes a lot of behind the scenes things working together and being maintained properly. Our values are like the mechanical parts that will determine how efficiently things flow and how well we achieve the desired results. So this series of studies about our values is a chance for us to revisit what's really going on underneath the surface.

We've looked at two values so far: *Worship Is Central* and *Truth Must Be Well-Told*. This morning, we're looking at value #3: *The church is a mission outpost*.

Apparently originality must not be one of our values, because we stole last week's value from an ad agency and we borrowed this week's from a book. Author Kennon Callahan wrote this line: "The day of the local church is over. The day of the mission outpost has come."

He goes on to explain that he doesn't mean local churches are going to go away. He just says they're going to need to rethink how they operate if they are going to function effectively in our world today.

There was a day when growing up in America you were exposed to the gospel at almost every turn in the surrounding culture. Bibles were used as textbooks in school. Businesses closed on Sundays. Prayers and hymns were used in public gatherings. Holidays were overtly Christian. Church was in step with society at large, so the need to reach out didn't feel as urgent. And many churches turned instead to focus on ministry within the congregation. The assumption was that when people were searching, they would come to the church doors.

Things have changed. Today, if you took all the Americans who have no church connection, it would be roughly the entire population of Mexico, or about 100 million people. As people of other religious and non-religious backgrounds have migrated to the U.S., there has been more and more of an effort to remove references to Christianity from public life to make things more neutral.

So the average person on the street no longer knows the Jesus story. They won't pick up on it in our culture anymore unless they're specifically taught it. And unlike in the past, most people looking for answers won't run to church to find them.

Kennon Callahan is saying the church needs to shift its focus, because it's no longer on the same page as the world around it.

We can sit and wring our hands over how the world has changed and long for the good old days. But I'm not so sure those were the good old days. Because I believe the true calling of the church has always been to act a mission outpost. The church is no longer a destination for all the Christians out there to come IN -- we are a base for sending Christians OUT. Church is not the place where we go to "do ministry." Church gatherings are where we go to get what we need to get back out in the world and do what God is asking of us.

The church is at its healthiest when it has this kind of outward focus. In his book "The Missionary Nature of the church," Johannes Blauw wrote this: *It is exactly by going outside itself that the Church is itself and comes to itself.*

That may give you a little background on the need for the church to change, but what exactly do we mean by a mission outpost?

Let's talk about the word mission first. What comes to mind when you think of that word? Mission impossible? Mission style furniture? Mission macaroni? Mission comes from the Latin word that means "to send off." But it is more than sending someone off as a tourist on vacation: to be sent on a mission is to be sent with an objective. The courier who is asked to deliver the important package. The rescue team dispatched to save a hostage.

Mission is outward movement. Mission is goal oriented. Mission is strategic. Mission is an action word.

Jesus himself was on a mission. Over and over again through the gospels, Jesus refers the fact that he had been "sent off" by his Father. And he was sent with an objective -- the most important objective -- to save the world. And ever since Jesus first left heaven to come to earth, the gospel message has been on the go, moving ever outward.

We say that the Church is the body of Christ. If we're that connected to him and he had a mission, that means we must have the same mission. Jesus told his disciples directly,

**John 20:21**

*As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*

He passed along his own mission to them and to all the rest of us who would choose to follow him. He put the nature of that mission in clear terms just before he went back to heaven. He told his disciples:

**Matt 28:18-20**

*God authorized and commanded me to commission you: Go out and train everyone you meet, far and near, in this way of life, marking them by baptism in the threefold name: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. Then instruct them in the practice of all I have commanded you. I'll be with you as you do this, day after day after day, right up to the end of the age.*

The church has been on a sending spree from the beginning. But if we don't do so intentionally, we will slide into focusing just on ourselves. So we're holding this up as a value at New Day to keep mission front and center. Otherwise, we become like a club, and church was never intended to be a club. William Temple put it well when he wrote, *The church is the only society on earth that exists for the benefit of non-members.*

We are the sent ones. That explains the word mission, but we also have the word "outpost" in this value. That's one you won't really find in Scripture. What does that mean?

If you ever happen to be driving northbound on State Route 291, about ten miles north of Spokane you'll see this monument. It marks the site of the Spokane House, the first permanent outpost established by non-Native folks in Washington State. It was a trading post of the North West Company, and it started out as just a makeshift little cabin built by

two men in 1810 – Jaco Finlay and Finnan McDonald (known as Buffalo Finnan because he wrestled a buffalo).

Plunked down in the middle of a vast, untamed wilderness, the little trading post was more than just a cabin – it was a symbol. It was a way to **remember a bigger something**. It stood as this reminder that there was a large trading company somewhere else in the world. You might never know civilization existed if it wasn't for the presence of that outpost.

Spokane House also grew into a gathering place for pioneers in the area to **reconnect with each other**. Life could get very lonely out in the wild when you had no neighbors. They would have dances and parties there to help people endure the long winters and enjoy being together.

And of course as a trading post, the Spokane house also provided an important service. It was a place to **restock vital supplies**. If you were trying to homestead out in the forest, you were dependent on some place you could go for tools, seed, cloth, etc. You would need key resources to survive.

I find that whole story to be such a good metaphor for how to see the church as an outpost. Church helps us remember the bigger something. We're out there all week, up to our necks in stressful situations and difficult relationships. The world can be a big dark wilderness that is an overwhelming place. And we need to see that glimmer of light through the trees once in a while to make us go, "Oh yes. There is something more. I can get through this."

As we talked about a couple weeks ago, that's why worship is so central in church life. Anything that draws us into the presence of Almighty God will give us fresh perspective for facing our daily lives. It reminds us that there is a bigger picture.

Church is also a place to reconnect with one another. There's a reason why Scripture calls us the body of Christ – all the parts are supposed to stay connected. We live in our own individual little silos during the week where we can get isolated. It's easy to feel discouraged and to forget what you're out there for. Coming back and connecting with other Christians is essential to survival. We need each other.

And then there's the idea of restocking on vital supplies. We come together to get what we need to go back out in the world. Paul was explaining this to the Ephesian church and said,

#### **Ephesians 4:11-12**

*He is the one who gave these gifts to the church: the apostles, the prophets, the evangelists, and the pastors and teachers. Their responsibility is to equip God's people to do his work and build up the church, the body of Christ.*

Church services aren't where all the ministry happens – they're where the equipping happens so that everyone will be well stocked and supplied to do ministry out in the world, wherever they may be.

Think about people going to the Spokane house. They wouldn't make the trip from their homesteads miles away just to window shop. They would know what they needed and what they were wanting to do, whether it was get ingredients to bake bread or buy an axe to chop wood or a sewing machine to make clothes.

You can't be resupplied if you don't know what it is you need. For the church to restock and equip people, we first have to help them discover what God has called them to do so they can see what it is they need.

When you came to church this morning, what supplies were you hoping to get? Sometimes people just need to be fed so they don't starve. Sometimes people need the training to explain their faith. Some people need direction and wisdom for a decision. Some people need encouragement. Some people need prayer partners. Some people need a word from Scripture. Sometimes people are wounded and need healing up. I want to come back to that in just a moment, but I did want to make one more side comment on this word outpost.

After about 15 years, the furs began to be depleted. New ownership came in, and the post was moved to Fort Colville. Every last scrap of anything valuable was transplanted to the new location, so today historians have had a difficult time even finding artifacts that show Spokane House even existed. Today, this marker is about all there is to see.

If church is an outpost, it is **a means, not an end**. We're not building a little empire here. A mission outpost is invested completely in its function – not its own preservation. I knew one pastor from Seattle who used to say that if his church wasn't operating almost in the red, it wasn't doing its job. That kind of disregard for the financial health of the church may shock some of us, but isn't that the point? Are we more concerned about our own sustainability or what it is we feel called to do?

I was talking with somebody recently about how church plants in Mexico struggle if they don't have a building. They're viewed suspiciously as if they're a cult, because in that culture, the Catholic church is so prominent and always has buildings. Any group without a building has a credibility problem. Buildings are relatively cheap in Mexico, and we were saying wouldn't it be awesome to help a church there build a building before we built our own? That's what I mean by being more concerned about mission than our own preservation.

Maybe someday God will want us to plant a daughter church and it will cost us people and money who we could really use here. Or maybe God will ask us to support other ministries in this area that share our mission. We want to love Jesus more than we love being a church. Selfless, total abandonment to his cause. When we are more motivated by concern for the church's own security and stability, we've lost our sense of mission.

Christ's philosophy wasn't one of self-preservation, so ours can't be either. The idea of church as an outpost will hopefully be one more reminder that all the trappings are temporary and expendable. Church is something to be held loosely.

The age of the local church is over. The age of the mission outpost has come. It's a radical concept. And I like it. It makes me feel like we're on a pioneering, trailblazing adventure. But if we really believe it, then we also need to change how we see ourselves. Because if you and I are the ones going to a mission outpost, that must mean we're the ones on a mission. We need to begin identifying ourselves as "the sent ones."

I want to take the rest of our time to invite you to do a little internal inspection like they do to keep that fountain running. Luke tells a story of a time when Jesus commissioned a large group of people at once. We can find in it a checklist, and as you listen I want you to really be asking yourself, "Do I see myself as a sent one, and if I do, what does that mean?"

**Luke 10:1-9, 17-20**

*After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go.*

Let's pause there for a moment. Normally, we would think about what Jesus is doing in terms of a business or sales model. You divide up territory among your representatives to cover more ground.

That's not quite what this says. This says Jesus sent them out two by two to all the places he was about to go. He's going to be personally active in those same places where his disciples are going – they're not standing in for him.

Have you ever stopped to examine your life, your job, your family, your school and thought: What would God want to do in this place? What might be his agenda for having me here at this moment in time? In other words, **Ask where Christ wants to go..**

Erwin McManus was once standing in line to get tickets to see the show The Price Is Right. He didn't really care to go, but his wife really wanted to, so he agreed. It turned into a five hour wait in line.

While he was waiting, he started talking to the woman next to them, who happened to be an immigrant from the former Soviet Union. They got on the topic of spiritual things, and Erwin started sharing with her about Jesus.

The woman stopped him and asked, "How can I believe in a God who only comes to America and not other people around the world? What about the person in India or China who's never even heard of him?"

Erwin asked her if she thought God loved her more than the person in India, and she said, "No, that's the whole point." Then he walked her through how God had brought him

from El Salvador, through Miami, to the East Coast to Los Angeles to the line for The Price is right to see a show he didn't even like. And here she was from some small town in a country whose name he couldn't even pronounce. If God could bring her from one part of the world and him from another part and move them to the exact time and place so that she could learn that Jesus Christ died for her, didn't she think that God was creative and powerful enough to bring life to everyone who would cry out to him? And he says, "There in the line at the Price Is Right, her heart softened and she turned her life over to Christ."

God doesn't send us anywhere by random chance. He puts us in the places he's about to go and do something.

Sometimes Christ is wanting to send us places we don't want to go. Sometimes the place Christ wants to take us isn't a location. Maybe he's asking us to deal with something from our past. Maybe he wants us to face a tough relationship issue. Everywhere he sends us, he sends us with a mission and a promise that he will be going there with us.

*He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. Go!"*

There is a big job to do and not enough people to do it. So Jesus says pray about it. Pray that God would raise up the team he needs to accomplish his purposes.

It starts with prayer, and I have to confess, I rarely pray that way. I'm more concerned that God raise up a team to do what I want him to do. God help me get over this cold. God make this meeting go well. But if we want to see ourselves on a mission, the beginning point is to **Pray yourself into a job**. If we start praying for God's work to be accomplished, our hearts will begin to care more about God's work being accomplished.

I love it that no sooner does Jesus tell them to pray than he says "Go!" These people are to get their head and hearts on board with the mission, and then get their hands and feet on board, too. No sooner does Jesus plant the thought of prayer in their heads than he gives the answer to the prayer, which is, "It's you. Go."

*I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. Do not take a purse or bag or sandals; and do not greet anyone on the road.*

What an unexpected thing for him to say to them. "Here you go – I'm sending you out small and weak against a big and dangerous foe. Oh – and don't take any supplies with you."

That sounds like a recipe for disaster. But I believe a big part of God's sending strategy is to help us learn to depend on him. Being on mission is to **Practice neediness**.

I would venture to say that if we feel confident and comfortable and totally prepared for a particular ministry, chances are it isn't really mission. The way Christ sends us out is in a

state of having to lean on him for everything – protection, strength, courage, wisdom, etc. The more we can admit and recognize our own neediness, the more usable we become.

I was thinking about preaching this series three years ago and what's different about preaching it this time. It feels like this time we have a lot more people who are going through really desperate circumstances. Some of you know all too well what it feels like to be a sheep among wolves. You're feeling attacked and weak and barely hanging on. And quite frankly, mission is the furthest thing from your mind because you're just trying to hang on.

If that's you this morning, then I hope this point will encourage you. You don't need to try and be strong and muscle through. You can press close to God and take your desperation to him. He knows and sees your need, and his expectation of you is nothing more spectacular than depending on him and clinging to him. Because some of his most powerful work happens in and through people who are at the end of their rope. You don't have to get through your crisis before he can use you – sometimes the crisis is the mission.

Jesus told the 72:

*"When you enter a house, first say, 'Peace to this house.' If a man of peace is there, your peace will rest on him; if not, it will return to you. Stay in that house, eating and drinking whatever they give you, for the worker deserves his wages. Do not move around from house to house.*

*"When you enter a town and are welcomed, eat what is set before you.*

Twice in two verses, Jesus instructs the disciples to eat whatever is put in front of them. This kind of flies in the face of Jewish concerns about kosher food. But Jesus had told them it isn't what goes in your mouth that makes you unclean – it's what comes out of your heart. He didn't want them instantly putting barriers between themselves and the people they were trying to reach by not accepting their hospitality.

If we want to be about mission, it's time to **Lose your inner critic**. Mission is always putting yourself in the other person's shoes, building bridges and establishing relationships. One of the most common perceptions of Christians today is that they are intolerant and judgmental. And we do have to care about sin. But it's the sin of people who call themselves Christians. Paul specifically told the Corinthian church, "I'm not talking about people outside the church. You'd have to leave the world if you couldn't associate with anybody who sinned."

Mission means risking stepping into somebody else's world without asking them to clean up their act first. We might not know how to do that or what that looks like. But that's okay – that gets us back to our neediness.

I remember a couple who had grown up in the era when card playing was considered a major taboo for Christians because it was associated with gambling. All their life, they avoided playing cards for fear of the association. But that was really the only social thing their neighbors did. So one night, after years and years of living next door, they decided to get together with them and play cards. And guess what? They had a really good, sin-free time. And they made a new connection. But they had a sad realization too when they thought of all the years they had been afraid to do that. What opportunities had they missed because of a barrier they had put up?

You might listen to that and think it's pretty archaic. But we all put up barriers. Think of your neighbors and coworkers and classmates. What makes you dismiss them? What do you do that might be sending a signal that you are intolerant or judging? Being on mission means losing our inner critic.

*Heal the sick who are there and tell them, 'The kingdom of God is near you'...*

When Jesus talked about his own ministry, he always pointed to healing as being part of the proof. How could people know the kingdom was near? Through the healing Jesus was doing. Then when he sent out his disciples, he told them to do the same thing. I believe part of our mission will always be to **Spread healing**.

Some people feel this part of Christ's ministry ended with early Christianity. I don't see any reason in the Bible why we should believe that. Scripture tells us to pray for one another's healing, so it seems like the obedient thing to do. God may choose to grant the request for healing or not, but he clearly invites us to think and act like he is still powerful enough to answer.

Another way to put it is that if we're serious about mission, then a goal of our lives will be to bring restoration to people. I'm not just talking about physical healing – I mean emotional healing, speaking blessing into their lives, extending forgiveness, pouring out that gracious speech we talked about last week. Think of it this way: Do I have a wounding effect on people or a healing effect? In general am I tearing down or building up? God's mission is always ultimately linked to healing.

*The seventy-two returned with joy and said, "Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name."*

*He replied, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. However, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven."*

Christ has put an incredible amount of authority into the hands of his followers. He says we have the authority to overcome ALL the power of the enemy.

These seventy two people were ecstatic because apparently it actually worked! The power was real and they saw all the things they could do. And Jesus affirms their amazement. But then he reminds them that they can't get sidetracked with performance and success. What's the real source of joy is that they have a relationship with God.

Mission demands that you **Center your joy**. As soon as we get sidetracked with results or our own influence, we have lost sight of mission. The things that are going well can become the things that distract us. Because then we become preoccupied with ourselves. Joy is in the relationship with Jesus. Security is in knowing we have a permanent place with him. That's always at the heart of mission, and nothing can preempt it.

When Christ came, his mission was to give himself away. The question is, "Are we on board with that same mission?" Am I promoting myself or him? Am I spreading healing or hurt where I go? Am I learning to depend on him?

The church is a mission outpost. This is the place to come to get what you need to go back out in the world. What are you needing this morning? As you prepare to come to the Lord's Table, take some time to ask Christ to restock your supply.