

In the past two months, people have told me they've made some incredible discoveries.

SCREEN: bad haircut photo

For example, I have a friend who's learned to cut his children's hair.... not well, but still, that's something, right?

(By the way, not an actual photo of his handiwork)

Another parent is relearning fourth grade math.

Some are realizing that they love to bake.

Others are finding joy by sewing face masks, by helping their neighbors or by feeding the hungry.

And many parishioners have told me they've grown in faith by turning to God more.

So, what discoveries have you made and how have they changed you?

More importantly, have they helped you grow in faith?

SCREEN: Sent main screen

This is week two of our message series titled, **Sent**.

When Jesus appeared to his followers after he rose from the dead he told them this:

*As the Father sent me, **so I send you.***

Disciples are sent.

Today we heard that one Apostle went to some pretty amazing lengths to put this into practice.

So our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles, told us that Philip traveled to Samaria to preach the Good News that Jesus is the messiah.

Samaria is about 100 miles from Jerusalem.

To drive it today would take you about 3 hours.

But 2000 years ago, a journey that far would have taken days.

So, Philip went to great physical lengths to get there.

But he also had to push himself emotionally and spiritually

because Samaritans and Jews went to great lengths to avoid each other.

They lived in different countries, they worshipped differently and

even saw each other as belonging to different races.

Remember the story Jesus told about the 'Good Samaritan'?

Anyone in his audience would have said, *'there's no such person!'*

That gives you some idea of how Jews and Samaritans viewed each other.

Knowing all this helps you see just how difficult and dangerous

Philip's trip to Samaria was.

I'm sure his friends all told him,

Philip, don't go, this mission is a lost cause!

So, why did he go?

The simple answer is that Philip knew he was *sent*.

On the day of Jesus's Ascension he gave this command to Philip and the Apostles:

SCREEN: Go make disciples of all nations. -Matthew 28:19

Notice Jesus didn't say, *'Go make disciples, but only in Jerusalem.'*

He didn't say, *'Make disciples, but before you do,*

be sure they look like you and worship like you.'

No, Jesus was pretty clear: he instructed them to go make disciples of **ALL** nations.

So Philip was just being obedient to Jesus by preaching in Samaria.

Oh, and to all those haters and naysayers who said he'd fail,

here's how Philip did:

SCREEN: With one accord, the crowds paid attention to what was

said by Philip when they heard it and

saw the signs he was doing.

For unclean spirits, crying out in a loud voice,

came out of many possessed people,

and many paralyzed or crippled people were cured.

There was great joy in that city. -Acts 8: 6-8

This is amazing!

So the 'enemy' turned out to be really friendly.

The people considered close-minded were incredibly open.

The nation they said would never change, completely changed.
Philip also discovered some incredible things about himself in Samaria.
For example, he'd found he'd been given the ability to teach,
to heal, and to lead others to Christ's Kingdom.
These are all things he'd only seen Jesus do.
Philip would have never discovered any of this
if he'd played it safe,
if he'd just kept doing what he'd always done
and remained where it was comfortable.

But Philip didn't discover all of this on his own - he had some help.
His helper was the Holy Spirit.

When Jesus sent his Holy Spirit upon the Apostles at Pentecost,
it changed them...and it made Philip's mission possible.

For Jesus's disciples, the Holy Spirit opened up a new way
of seeing God's Kingdom.

And because they were open, here's what discovered about Christ's Kingdom:
the Kingdom of God is not local, it's global.

It's not exclusive, it's inclusive.

They realized that God's Kingdom is not narrow, it's wide.

This new vision made amazing things possible for the Apostles.

Not only were the Samaritans converted,
so were the Corinthians and Ephesians and Romans.

Because the disciples were dedicated to building Christ's Kingdom,
you and I are followers of Jesus.

And you and I have been sent to build Christ's Kingdom today.

If you want to be obedient like Philip, learn from his example.

He has so much to teach you about being sent.

SCREEN: Being sent means going someplace new

For one thing, Philip shows that being sent means going someplace new
- the very word implies movement.

Just like for him, this requires you to make a journey.

Not a physical journey - that's not possible for anybody right now -
but an emotional and spiritual journey.

Philip knew he couldn't remain in Jerusalem.

He had to be willing to leave behind what was safe
and comfortable and known to him.

It wasn't easy.

But because he accepted Christ's call and took on his mission,
Philip discovered that great things are possible.

The same is true for you.

SCREEN: Being sent requires you to trust the sender

Here's something else you can learn from Philip.

Just like him, disciples who are sent have to put their trust
in the one who is sending them.

Philip trusted God....despite the risks: risks of failure, rejection, and ridicule.

And because he trusted, the Holy Spirit was able to lead Philip to do great things.

The same is true for you.

Trust that the Holy Spirit is with you.

Believe that you can do great things, that you can lead others to Christ's Kingdom.

And you might be asking the question, how?

How can I do what Philip did?

How can I 'go into the whole world and make disciples'???

I know it can sound pretty overwhelming.

I'm sure it was for the Apostles too.

But here's how you begin:

see where God has placed you right now - that's the starting point of your journey.

It's the first step in your journey to greatness.

SCREEN: who is in your circle of influence?

Think of the circle of influence you have right now.

Your 'circle of influence', meaning, your family and friends and neighbors.

It includes your coworkers, your classmates and parishioners.

They are the ones Christ is sending you to right now.

And you don't have to go too far to find them.

What does Jesus want you to do or say?

It doesn't require a sermon or speech.

Simply offer them encouragement and hope...you're probably doing it already.

Right now, encouragement and hope are powerful gifts to receive and so many need them.

Like every disciple, God wants you to share with the people in your life why you have hope.

Here's what the Apostle Peter wrote in today's second reading:

SCREEN: Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope. - 1 Peter 3: 15

You can share hope by calling someone, by sending them an email or text.

You can share something hopeful you found on social media - you can share our links with them.

But no matter how you choose to reach out, always be hopeful.

There's enough negativity and pessimism right now.

No one needs more and shouldn't get any from you.

Be positive, joyful, encouraging.

I'm not saying be phony.

Instead remember the reason for your hope - it's Jesus.

And if you're feeling doubtful in these challenging times, let me remind you why you can be hopeful.

You can be hopeful because you're a child of God and we are all brothers and sisters.

You can be hopeful because God's love says that you are more than the worst choices you've made; that your shame does not define you, your wounds can be healed.

With God, you can be hopeful that your broken relationships can be repaired, that addictions can be conquered, and that through every storm that comes your way,

God will walk beside you, holding your hand, and leading you through.

And when your earthly life draws to a close, eternal life with God begins.

Christ conquered sin and death forever.

These truths fill me with hope everyday, I hope they do the same for you.

So that's what Jesus is asking you to share right now.

Because Peter told us to be ready when others ask why we're hopeful,

I want to give you a little homework assignment for this coming week.

SCREEN: Why are you hopeful right now?

Answer this question:

If someone in your circle of influence asked you:

Why are you hopeful right now?

What would you say?

Take some time this week and really think of your answer.

I suggest you write it out.

I know for me, writing something down makes it more real.

Just a few sentences, a paragraph or two.

It can help you prepare so when someone needs encouragement,
some is struggling, you are ready to give an explanation.

You and I are living in challenging times.

But as hard as life seems, as uncertain as the future looks,
we can be hopeful because God is with us and we have each other.

This week, let us hear the voice of the Holy Spirit leading us someplace new.

Like Philip and the Apostles, may we know that we have been sent. Amen. +