

Topic	Called, Moved and Sent
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They say that when you are speaking to a group and you have something that is heavy on your heart, it is good to share it, so that it does not dominate the conversation. I learned two hours ago that my brother has passed away and I share that with you because it is important for you to know where I am standing this morning and I pray that God will use the tenderness of my heart to sweeten his message to you and that my heart will not be so tender that it will be a distraction to you. We say in our counselling ministry consistently that God uses what is to transform us, not what ought to be, not what we would like it to be. I would rather be standing here, with the news that my brother has just passed away, but I am also very thankful to be standing here with you in the context of my brother passing away, because you are my comfort in this moment. I deeply appreciated your words about the life group coming to you and ministering to you, is very touching to me.

The body of Christ is just absolutely so precious and so rare and again I am privileged to be with you even in this moment. It does make very real what I am sharing with you today because of what I am experiencing in my heart as I speak to you. We are talking today about being called, moved and sent. The older I get, the simpler I get. I don't know if that's progress or regress. I hope its progress, but I would like you to just remember three words today. I am going to share a story with you in a moment that I would also like you to remember, but if you just remember those three words and that story that would be well good enough for me. The purpose is that, I believe that God is working among us today. I also believe very strongly that the community preaches the Word of God. You have a mouthpiece, but we preach this together.

My intention today is to reflect it at quite a deep level and I will give it up to God as to whether we reach that level. To reflect on the issue of fulfilment in our lives, living the abundant life that Jesus promised to us and by fulfilment I am sure you understand that I am not talking about happiness, I am not talking about things going well for us, I am not talking about possessions or anything besides deep fulfilment in God. But God created you and me to be fulfilled in Him. Sometimes we shy away from talking about fulfilment because it lean so quickly in the direction of being fulfilled by things that are not of God, but I would like expressly

talk this morning about you and me and our lives in God and what it means to be fulfilled in him and what creates problems in that and what is important in that. So, the thing that I am addressing primarily this morning is a question of identity. That has to do with who you and I are. It also has to do with who you and I think we are, because those two things do not always go together and in some ways that are very difficult for people to handle, they matter greatly. So, I want to focus on questions of identity.

For human beings, identity is very-very crucial. You may know people who have been adopted, who are in search of their natural parents and you will see that journey is often a very passionate one. They want to know who they are, they want to know where they came from, they want to know the story of their lives. So, you see in certain situations in particular that a human being's understanding of their identity is very crucial to them, very important to their life and it is very central in our relationship with God. Now, as God would have it, he has centered our identity in Him. That's what leads to our fulfillment but you and I and many people struggle with that particular concept.

We have questions of identity for Christ followers and they are answered in the context of course of our relationship with Jesus Christ. That's where we answer, that's where we resolve, that's where we get the answer for our identity, but in our line of work, in which we are called by God to go into dark places in dark situations with people suffering with grief, we are called as Christ followers, particularly in our ministry to move into those situations that are particularly painful and so I would like to share with you a few of those situations to talk about, how tragic it can be when someone doesn't understand their identity in God. Then I want to also bring it out to just relate to you and me, but I want to share some examples with you.

I practiced in California on the Westcoast of United States for about 9 years. When I was there, I worked with a 15-year-old male client who is an accidental child of two physicians who are absentee parents. He made a decision when he was 9 years old that he was going to take his life on his 21st birthday, unless his life radically changed. He had no idea about who he is in God. He had no deep connection with God. He really didn't have any deep connection with anybody in his life. His identity was simply one of being unwanted. One of the ministries that is close to our hearts is that of working with women who are being rescued from human trafficking. These women have suffered horrible sexual and physical abuse, domestic violence often at the hands of those who were supposed to protect them, parents and other family members. These women have no idea who they are in God. Their identity is simply one of being unworthy of anything but abuse.

I recall the situation of a 36-year-old single mother of two young children. She lost her mother when she was 4 years old to a massive stroke. Her father got cancer a year later then died when she was 6 years old. She went from unhealthy relationship to unhealthy relationship in her life, each time eventually ending up being abandoned. She had no idea about who she is in God. Her whole identity was one of being abandoned.

From those with disabilities to those from broken homes, those raised in alcoholic homes, those raised in domestic violence, those raised with perfectionism, those raised with parents unable to handle emotion, to those raised by people who blamed and scapegoated them, to those who have suffered horrific trauma or loss or abandonment or poverty, many of us struggle to know who we are in God and that truly determines, affects greatly the outcome of our lives.

Now for you and me, it may not be quite as tragic, but we struggle too to know our identities. I come from a divorced home. My parents divorced when I was 9. My experience of my identity was that I must have done something not quite right or else my parents would not have divorced. So, my identity became one of making sure that I was good enough in order to be loved and I have struggled with that, part of my identity for all these years. You may also have some struggles with knowing who you are in God. Truly knowing in your heart who you are in God in a way that does bring fulfillment to you and fulfillment in God in your life. So, we have examples from our lives, we struggle also because we don't truly know who we are in God's eyes. So, what I want to focus on in terms of our identity is three different things, as I shared with you that we are called, we are moved and we are sent.

I wanted to share a story about a recent convert to Christianity and the recent convert is having a conversation with a theologian, but the theologian, though he is an expert in theology, has yet to be transformed by his theology. Tim Hansel says, **all of our theology must eventually become biography**. The theologian says to the recent convert.

Theologian: So, you have been converted to Christ.

Recent Convert: Yes.

Theologian: Then you must know a great deal about him. Tell me what country was he born in?

Recent Convert: I don't know.

Theologian: How many sermons did he preach?

Recent Convert: I don't know.

Theologian: How many miracles did he performed?

Recent Convert: I don't know.

Theologian: You certainly know very little for a man who claims to be converted to Christ.

Recent Convert: You are right, I am ashamed of how little I know about him, but this much I do know three years ago I was a drunkard, I was in debt, my family was falling to pieces, my wife and children dreaded my return home each evening, but now I have given up drinking. We are out of debt, ours is now a happy home. All this Christ has done for me and this much I know of him.

Knowing something and being transformed by something are two different things. That's the story that I invited you to remember. There is a difference between being informed and transformed. We can be informed which is wonderful, but if we are not transformed, we are not talking about the gospel. So, we are talking in our setting about how information that doesn't lead to transformation is not part of the proclamation of the gospel. Jesus never intended to impart information. He intended to change the lives of those who heard his voice. So, we are called, moved and sent but are we merely informed about these aspects of our identity or are we transformed by them.

We Are Called:

Isaiah 43:1-7 is the salvation oracle but it is unusual it is written in such personal individual intimate language and so we find in scripture that we see salvation history played out through scripture but we also apply all of scripture to our lives and so I am taking the tender intimate side of this scripture today and focusing on the application to us individually, knowing that it also is very important in terms of salvation history as a salvation oracle. The start of the passage is incredibly powerful and simple, it says,

But now thus says the Lord,

Tim Hansel talked in one of his books about how he began to meditate. He was driving a youth bus home from a youth retreat and he was the driver of the bus and so the kids were all sort of messing around at the back of the bus and not really paying attention to the youth pastor who was driving the bus, so he started meditating on the 23rd psalm. He said, I spent three hours meditating on the word 'The'. Because he said, I realized that 'The' was pointing to something that was real and I just caught up in the fact that this psalm is introducing to me something that is real and that the Lord is my shepherd.

So, we find those moments where just very simple words can take us soaring into God's presence and into what he is communicating with us.

We are talking about redemption from captivity in the context. We are talking about God, talking about the fact that Israel was not obeying and that there was a great rupture in the relationship, but this simple phrase is so characteristic of the way that God relates to you and me. As we go through our days, we can so often say, this is the way I feel but now thus says the Lord. This is what I am suffering but now thus says the Lord. This is what I am tempted to fear but now thus says the Lord. This is his word, this is what he is saying to me about it.

There is a great change that God brings in our lives.

He who created you O Jacob, He who formed you O Israel

God is saying that a big part of your identity is that He has created you and me. We all know that in our heads, we rehearse that, it is not new theology to you but to be able to move that in your heart in a way that you understand it, in a way that you understand that your value is immense because God has created you, is part of the gift of scripture. The word of God creating life in us.

Do not fear, for I have redeemed you;

We talk a lot in our setting about how God sifts everything that comes to us. God says, you don't have to fear the pain and grief because I have redeemed you and I have redeemed your situation.

I have called you by name, you are mine.

Such an intimate-intimate comment about calling each one of us by name.

When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you;

So no matter what you and I face and it is interesting that he doesn't say, if you pass through the waters, it doesn't say if you pass through the rivers. He says that, you will, but part of your identity is that you are mine and because you are mine I will not allow you to be overwhelmed. I will be with you in whatever it is that you suffer.

when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you.

Why because now our identity gets linked together with his identity. We are secure because of who He is. We are secured in him because we are owned by him. So not only is it important to know who we are, it is important to know whose we are. We are God's but he is the great I am.

For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your Savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. 4 Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.

Can you imagine those lives that I just described to you being able to hear those words? Women who are coming out of being trafficked, to be able to hear those words, you are precious in my sight and honored because they have not experienced any honor. The woman who was raised in the situation where she lost mother and father within a couple of years constantly feeling abandoned, well God is saying, I am with you in everything but also saying, your identity is not one of being abandoned. Your identity is one of being precious in my sight, you are honored, I love you.

5 Do not fear, for I am with you;

So, we have a repetition again of God saying that in everything that you and I face, God is with us. The great solution to fear in scripture is the presence of God. The great solution to anything that we face in our lives is the presence of God and then he will gather us to him.

for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and from the west I will gather you; I will say to the north, "Give them up, and to the south, "Do not withhold; bring my sons from far away and my daughters from the end of the earth—

Again, this has to do with being released from captivity, being gathered to God but also as we interpret it, personally he is gathering us to him, into his presence, into a relationship with him.

everyone who is called by my name, whom I created for my glory, whom I formed and made."

So there in the midst of him talking about our identity is him talking about the fact that the purpose of all of it is that you and I being created for his glory. Because when we glorify God, we are most fulfilled. When we are most fulfilled, we most glorify God and again I mean fulfilled by God, in relationship with him. You and I are most glorifying of God when you and I resemble Jesus Christ. So, the connection then becomes one of being formed into the image of Christ as the best way that you can I can glorify God and in that glorification, we find our fulfillment. So, the punch line at the end is that, it is all created for his glory.

So we are called dear friends, you and I have that at the center of our identity that we are called and whatever it is that our life has communicated to us about who we are, saying to us that we are abandoned, saying to us that we are unwanted, unloved, saying to us that we must be good enough in order to be loved, those bondages are broken in the face of God saying to you and me, you are precious in my sight and honored and I love you and I call you by name. So, you and I are called first to God that's the center of our identity as we are called first to him, called by name – we are his. We are protected by him. We are precious in his sight. We are created for his glory.

But then we are called then by God, called to God called by God. So, we are called first to him and then we are called to service for him, to ministry in his name, to purpose in his name.

It is our duty to provide soul care for one another and we stack it alongside the Great Commission because you cannot serve the Great Commission without serving the Soul Care Commission, because you cannot make disciples unless you care for the souls of the people that you are discipling. So, the Soul Care Commission is crucial for our understanding of what we are sent by God what we are called by God, better said to do.

This passage is what Jesus declared as his mission statement. So, in Luke 4 when Jesus was announcing his ministry, he quoted this verse. So, if it was Jesus mission, so it has to be our mission as well. So, we take on his mission and we are then called by God in order to serve this mission.

Isaiah 61:1-3

"The Spirit of the Sovereign Lord is on me, because the Lord has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives and release from darkness for the prisoners, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor and the day of vengeance of our God, to comfort all who mourn, and provide for those who grieve in Zion– to bestow on them a crown of beauty instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of

mourning, and a garment of praise instead of a spirit of despair. They will be called oaks of righteousness, a planting of the Lord for the display of his splendor.”

We are Moved:

When we come to God and we are close to God, when we experience being loved by God, when our identity is centered in God we are moved because God is moved. God is moved by our suffering and as we take on his identity we are moved as well. We are moved like Jesus was moved.

In Luke 7 Jesus raises the widow's son from the death and there is just that phrase in that, where it says, **the Lord's heart went out to her**. The Lord meant them in the midst of her pain and suffering. So, Jesus was moved, we are moved as well. John 11, when Jesus came to minister to Martha and Miriam when Lazarus died, it says twice about Jesus being moved. He is moved by Mary's tears and then he is moved again later in the passage in John 11:38 where it says, once more deeply moved Jesus came to the tomb. Jesus is moved by our suffering. Again, that's theologically true, but just knowing that and not having it change us is exactly what we are speaking about this morning. We all know the theology of Jesus having compassion, but do we experience the Lord's compassion, do we allow him to minister his compassion to us, do we participate in our lives with him that we feel that compassion in our hearts and in a way that changes us as human beings.

So, Jesus was moved, we are moved because we take on the identity of Jesus Christ. So again, we are challenged, knowing something and being changed by something are two different things.

In our setting, we have people who are absolute bible scholars, so they go to three bible studies a week and they have been doing this for 20 years and they study the word of God faithfully and its wonderful and its beautiful and they have great knowledge of the Word of God, but the thing that is troubling sometimes is that their lives are not changed. They are struggling in ways that just knowing scripture is not changing their lives. So again, we are challenging one another this morning to say that knowing something and being changed by something are two different things.

Knowing scripture well is beautiful, its necessary, its not sufficient just to know it in our head. It has to be the process of spiritual osmosis to go down into the deepest levels of our souls, that we experience the word creating life in us, that we experience being changed by the Word of God. So, you and I are called to

compassion. Of course, the Good Samaritan comes to mind very quickly that we are lifted up in example. A person who was moved by the pain and suffering of another person.

Therefore, as God's chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience.
Colossians 3:12

Be moved by the pain and suffering of others and be moved in a way that you are called to do something about that. We are called to compassion. 2-Cor 1:3-5 focuses more on comfort but again the same idea of us being moved by the pain and suffering of others and I love this verse because it is out of overflow that we minister. Compassion is an overflow ministry. So, it is hard to share it, if you are not in a place where you can receive it and we will talk about that a little bit at the end of the message. So, we are called to compassion in this way,

Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God. **2 Corinthians 1:3-5**

We are Sent:

We are sent like Jesus was sent. God is obviously a sending God. It is part of his nature. He is a sending God. So, he sends forth his word to create reality in existence. He sends forth Jesus Christ as his son to redeem. He sends forth his holy spirit to live in us, God and the trinity, it is an ascending God that you and I worship. So being made to be like Jesus Christ means that we are also sent. So that's a very important part of our fulfilment as human beings is that we are sent and as we live that out, we find our fulfilment.

Isaiah 61:1-3 He has sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, to proclaim freedom for the captives

This mission that he is on, he has been sent to the mission by the father. 1 John 4:9-10, again there are lots of places in the New Testament where you talk about Jesus being sent, but just a couple of examples.

**⁹This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. ¹⁰This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins.
1 John 4:9-10**

As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

John 17:18

So you are I are sent, it is a core part of our identity. We are called first to him and then called by him, we are moved. Moved by the pain and suffering of others, moved by our pain and suffering and welcoming the compassion of God into our pain and suffering and then we are sent into the world to do God's bidding and to fulfill in caring out that mission.

Finally, the church is also sent. Someone once said, the church has been sent on a mission to announce the gospel of good news. This is what we do because it reflects who we are. There is that question of identity again. Our identity centered in God with what you do as Christ followers. We do it because it reflects who we are and who we are reflects the one who made us.

So, the role of the church is also to be called, moved and sent. As the bride of Christ and you are I, we worship an amazing God who would choose to make the bride of Christ part of the trinitarian community, so as Jesus and the bride of Christ, the church are united, the church is lifted into welcomed into the community of the trinity of God. So, the church has the highest ecclesiology and theology that you and I could ever imagine, because it is included in the trinity in terms of the community of the trinity. So, you and I, called, moved and sent as a body of Christ to support healing, growth and renewal, so that people can discover their true identity in being called, moved and sent.

Church is called, moved and sent in part to help you and me understand that we are called and moved and sent as part of our identity. So, the church needs to be a welcoming place for people to be able to experience their identity in Christ and in God.

Friends I think in our culture, we've lost the value of church. We've lost that sense of people thinking that all I really have to do is look up and find and know where to run for care for my soul.

Churches have to be primary provider of soul care in the community, not for Christ followers but for everybody. The church also needs to be a safe place, so we need to be a welcoming place, we need to be a safe place. We need to be a place where people experience the difference between knowing something and being changed by something. We need to be a place where people are accepted, no matter what they are struggling with. We need to be a place where people are not judged or criticized. We need to be a place without

measuring sticks, only the unconditional love of Jesus Christ. We need to be a place where people can experience themselves and their identity in Christ and being called and moved and sent.

Trevor Hudson talked about how the divine host presides over the banquet at the deep center of our beings. God invites us to search out the poor, crippled, blind and lame aspects of our own inner lives and bring them into the banqueting chamber. So, when Christ is shaping us we bring all of us into that banquet.

The end of the quote says,

Here the living Christ receives them with open arms and beings to include them in the new person that he is patiently forming.

It is clear that God is inviting us through all of scripture to know that our struggles are to be accepted unconditionally. You and I didn't stand in line for the most serious things that we face. The most serious things that you and I face, most all of the time, we didn't stand in line for those things and so they have grace for one another and welcoming one another into that healing place.

When you ask the question of yourself, who am I, can you get a sense of how grounded that is in your relationship with God. Can you get a sense of how you are precious in his sight and you are honored by him and he says to you, I love you. That is absolutely unconditional.

Do you have a sense of where you come from in terms of the fact that he created you and that he has redeemed you and that is a central part of your identity. Do you realize that your story is the story of Jesus Christ, that his story is being written into your life, that his story of redemption, his story of even of crucifixion, the false self in you and me in crucified, so that the true self can be resurrected. Jesus's story becomes our story, our story becomes his story.

Do you know at the heart level that you are called to God and called by God in a way that is life transforming. Are you moved by the pain and suffering of others and what are you sent by God to do. All of us have similar answers to the first two questions. We are all called to God and called by God in ways that are life transforming. We share that together. We are all called to be moved by the pain and suffering of others, but then we are all called to do something a little bit different. What is that you are being called to do? What are you being sent to do? Is that clear to you and is it life giving for you and are you willing to seek support and being changed by experiencing your true identity, because this is

not a solo journey, it was never intended to be. God is a communal God, he exists in community. You and I were never asked to bear our burdens alone, to travel the journey alone, to be formed into Christ alone, it's never worked that way and so for us to be able to say to one another, you are loved as you are, you are welcomed into the hospital for the sinners, rather than into a museum for saints. You are welcome and all of you are welcome and we watch together as Jesus begins to include all of you in the new person that he is patiently forming.

So I want to end by sharing another story with you because it is very relevant to you and me and what we end up doing sometimes.

There was a story told about a man who used to teach at Virginia Episcopal Seminary. One cold night, he got a call from the bus station in Washington. It was a young man who had grown up in a parish that this person's name John had served before as the pastor in the episcopal tradition of the parish. This young man's family was very active in the church and the young man told John that he had gotten into the drug culture. He had lost touch with his family. He was out of work and out of money and so John went to pick him up at the bus station to be able to rescue him.

When he got the young man into his car, he saw that he was emaciated truly in body, broken in spirit and he took him home and as the young man ate supper there with him John began to get some kind of an understanding of his condition. He asked the boy, if he had ever asked Jesus Christ to help him in his troubles. The young man said, no. It had been a long time since he had even thought about those things and then he brightened up a bit and he said, you know, when I get myself together and start coming back to church, I am going to ask Christ to help me. John said to the young man, it will never happen that way. If you think that you have to get yourself together on your own and then come to Christ, you will never do it, because it is not possible. You are going to have to come to Christ as you are at this moment and then He will give you the strength to start getting things together.

So friends, again knowing something and being changed by something are two different things and how you and I become people who are changed by things is by being able to engage that process of Christ working in our lives, but we do it together. We do it in community. We do it in ministry. We do it in soul care to one another. We live our lives in a way that reflects who we are, called, moved and sent. God is glorified in that and we are fulfilled and we then live the abundant life that Jesus promised but out of this could it be that God is asking you to make a deeper commitment, to knowing in a transforming way that you are called, moved and sent, not in an informational way. Are you saying, when

you get yourself together then you are going to ask Christ to help you? Dear brothers and sisters, I pray that God will indeed enlighten his word in you and create the word of life in you in a way that brings you new life and I pray that your identity being one of being called to God, called by God, being moved by the pain and suffering of others and being sent by God will truly be lifegiving for you.