



“Go Where I send You”
Lenten Study 2018 — Week Three
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Back in the mid 1980’s I was introduced to the sport of mountain biking while serving as Associate Pastor of Rapid City First United Methodist Church. I am a flat lander from

Iroquois South Dakota. The highest mountains I had ever biked was the highway overpass across the train tracks outside of town. Even after various wrecks and crashes, and getting old, I still enjoy mountain biking.

One thing I have never understood is why all the biking classes offered at the YMCA are called “spin” or “spinning” classes. Then one day it dawned on me, as I was riding on the beautiful Maah Daah Hey trail in the North Dakota badlands. When you are biking, you are actually going someplace but, when you are “spinning” that’s exactly what you are doing, spinning your wheels but going nowhere. Both provide exercise, mind you, but one of them doesn’t get you any place.

The metaphor proves true on many different levels, not the least of which includes worship, and church. Many people are “spinning” in worship, not really going anywhere. In chapter 3 of, “Making A Difference,” James Harnish reminds us that we are ultimately called to go, not just to spin.

We as United Methodists have a wonderful mission statement: “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ for the transformation of the World.” But I wish, personally, that it went a step further. I think we are doing a pretty good job making and becoming disciples but, I think the second half is a lot harder, transforming the world. If I was in charge, thank God I’m not, I’d like our statement to read “Making Disciples of Jesus Christ, who become apostles for Jesus Christ, who transform the world.” I’m not sure it would motivate us anymore, but maybe.

In Paul’s second letter to the Corinthian church he reminds them and us of this mission: *And all of this is a gift from God, who brought us back to himself through Christ. And God has given us this task of reconciling people to him. For God was in Christ, reconciling the world to himself, no longer counting people’s sins against them. And he gave us this wonderful message of reconciliation. So, we are Christ’s ambassadors; God is making his appeal through us. We speak for Christ when we plead, “Come back to God!”* 2 Corinthians 5:11, 18-20 NLT

It is a humbling experience to think that God has redeemed us, and even more humbling, to think that after redeeming us, God has called, gifted, empowered and expects us to join Him

in this ministry of reconciliation! Not every ministry of reconciliation looks the same. We dare not overlook that God has called all of us, not just to sit in church as important as that is, God has called us to do something for and with God, for the sake of the world.

In the Old Testament story of God’s calling on Moses, we observe four distinct steps. Harnish names these steps: stop, look, listen and go. Moses was stopped in his tracks at the sight of a burning bush. He looked up to God, argues with, and listened to God’s unwillingness to let him off the hook, and finally relents and chooses to go with God to win the release of God’s people from their bondage in Egypt. Your calling or mine, may not look as dramatic as Moses’, but we are called to do something besides just spinning our wheels.



Harnish includes four poignant questions toward the end of this chapter that can help us all quit spinning, and start going:

1. Am I finding the place where the Lord is sending me? We don’t all need to go to a foreign mission field, there are needs aplenty all around us. We just need to be “Holy Spirit inspired” to see the needs at our doorsteps.
2. Am I open to the unexpected ways in which God might open my eyes to a specific need? Sometimes we make it too hard. We think our going, our service has to be dramatic or heroic. When right there sitting across the street from our church is a school that needs readers and mentors, and lunch room attendants and tutors. Let’s be open for God to reveal something important for us to do.
3. Am I willing to change some of my assumptions about other people in order to be faithful to God’s call for my life? For eight years in my last appointment, I led a Bible Study at the North Dakota State Penitentiary. I had some deep-seated assumptions beginning that experience. At its conclusion I was able to say to the guys, now friends, the only difference between you and me is you got caught. We are all the same, sinful human beings, but none beyond the reach of God’s amazing grace. That opportunity changed my life.
4. Have I found a community of disciples to guide and support me? It is important to not wander off alone. Find someone else who shares your passion, and prayerfully decide how best together to meet the needs that God’s reveals.

So, what’s more important, breathing in or breathing out? One of them is more important than the other. The answer, if depends on what you just did last. If you just breathed in, the most important thing for you to do is breathe out. If you just breathed out, the most important thing you need to do is breathe in.

The same is true with worship and service. It depends on what you just did last. If you just got blessed by God in worship, the most important thing you must do is go and serve someone who needs what you have to offer. If you have been for a time on the front lines of serving, then the most important thing for you, is to gather for worship to be refreshed and refilled for the next adventure to which God is calling you. Go make a difference!