THE DAILY BREAD

The Mission of the Apostles



The Sent Life

Every Christian a Missionary

A FORMATION BOOK BY

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INTRODUCTION

You Have Been Sent

There is a word the risen Christ spoke to his first followers that was meant for every Christian who would ever come after them, though most have never heard it as addressed to themselves. Standing among them on the evening of his resurrection, he said, As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. Sending. Not merely saving them, not merely gathering them, not merely comforting them, but sending them, out, into the world, on a mission that was now theirs. And that word, sending, falls on every baptized Christian still, which means it falls on you. You have been sent. The only question is whether you know it, and whether you will go.

Most Christians do not know it, or do not believe it applies to them. They have absorbed, without ever quite deciding to, the notion that the mission belongs to someone else: to priests and religious, to professional missionaries, to the especially holy and the especially called, while they themselves are simply meant to receive the faith, practice it privately, and get themselves to heaven. This book exists to overturn that notion, which is one of the most damaging misunderstandings in the whole Christian life, and to put in its place the truth the Church has always taught and the modern world has largely forgotten: that every single baptized Christian is sent, is a missionary, is charged with carrying Christ into the particular corner of the world where he has been placed.

As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. — John 20:21

We will begin by dismantling the spectator faith that treats mission as someone else's job. We will trace the sending back to its root in Baptism, where every Christian was commissioned. We will see that a man's mission field is not somewhere far away but exactly where he already stands, and that his witness is carried first by his life and only then by his words. We will face the particular courage it takes to be visibly Christian in a world that prefers faith kept private, and we will see that the sent life is never lived alone but always as part of a sent people. And we will arrive at the truth that the sent life is not an add-on to the Christian life but its very meaning, the reason a man was saved, formed, and left in this world at all.

CHAPTER ONE

The End of the Spectator Faith

Mission Is Not Someone Else's Job

The most common way of being a Christian in the modern world is to be a spectator: to attend, to receive, to believe, to practice one's faith privately, and to leave the actual work of spreading it to the professionals. This spectator Christianity is so widespread that it passes for normal, and the man who lives it does not think of himself as failing at anything; he goes to Mass, says his prayers, tries to be good, and assumes that is the whole of what is asked of him. But it is not the whole, and the gap between this passive, receiving faith and the active, sent faith of the New Testament is the gap this book means to close.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. — Matthew 28:19

The Clergy Are Not the Only Apostles

At the root of the spectator faith lies a quiet but deep error: the belief that the mission of the Church belongs properly to the clergy and the religious, and that the ordinary layman's role is simply to be ministered to. On this view, the priest evangelizes, the missionary goes out, the religious prays and serves, and the layman receives the sacraments, supports the parish, and lives a decent private life. This division of labor feels natural and even humble, but it is a serious distortion of the Church's actual teaching, which holds that the laity are not passive recipients of a mission carried out by others but active sharers in the one mission of the whole Church. The Second Vatican Council taught with great force that the lay faithful are called by God to contribute to the sanctification of the world from within, like leaven, and that the apostolate of the laity is a genuine participation in the saving mission of the Church itself. The layman is not a spectator of the mission; he is a missionary, and the sooner he grasps this the sooner his Christian life takes on the shape it was always meant to have.

The Great Commission Was for Everyone

When the risen Christ gave the Great Commission, commanding his followers to go and make disciples of all nations, he was not addressing a clerical caste that did not yet exist; he was addressing his disciples, the whole body of his followers, and through them the whole Church of every age. The command to go has never been rescinded or restricted to a professional class; it stands over every Christian as a standing order, the marching command of the entire Church. To treat it as the special business of a few is to quietly exempt oneself from a command Christ gave to all, and to reduce to spectators those he meant to send. The man who reads the Great Commission and thinks that is for missionaries has misread it; it is for him, as surely as it was for the eleven on the

mountain, and the whole burden of the sent life is simply to take that command personally, as addressed to oneself, and to begin to obey it in the circumstances of one's own life.

Why the Spectator Faith Fails

The spectator faith fails not only the mission but the man who lives it, because a faith that only receives and never gives tends, over time, to shrink and grow stale. There is a spiritual law at work here: what is not shared is not fully possessed, and the Christian who never gives his faith away finds it slowly going flat in him, a private possession guarded but not lived, believed but not borne. The most alive Christians are almost always those who are actively sharing their faith in some way, because the giving keeps the faith vital, forces them to understand it, and connects them to the mission that is the Church's whole reason for being; and the most listless are often those who have made their faith a purely private affair, received and hoarded. The spectator faith, then, is not a safe middle path but a slow decline, a Christianity that has lost its forward motion and begins, for lack of a mission, to settle and congeal. The sent life is not only the faith's command but its health, and the man who takes up his mission finds his own faith coming alive in the very act of giving it away.

There is a reason this surprises so many sincere Christians, who assumed that the safest way to protect a precious faith was to keep it close. But faith is not a fragile heirloom that wears out with handling; it is more like a fire, which grows by being shared and dwindles when it is shut up with no air. The Christian who begins, however awkwardly, to give his faith away, to speak of it, to live it openly, to serve others in its name, finds it growing brighter and warmer in himself, while the one who hoards it in careful privacy finds it quietly going cold. The spectator has it exactly backward: the faith he is so anxious to preserve by keeping it private is the very faith his privacy is slowly starving.

CHAPTER TWO

Sent at Your Baptism

Where the Commission Was Given

If every Christian is sent, the natural question is when and how he received this commission, and the answer takes a man back to the very beginning of his Christian life, to the font where he was baptized. The sending is not a special vocation added later to a select few; it was given to every Christian at his Baptism, built into the very grace that made him a Christian at all. To understand the sent life, a man must understand what

happened to him in the waters of Baptism, for that is where he was made not only a child of God but a sharer in Christ's mission.

> *You are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness. — 1 Peter 2:9*

Baptism Makes a Missionary

Baptism does not merely cleanse a man of sin and make him a member of the Church; it configures him to Christ, who is priest, prophet, and king, and gives him a real share in each of these offices, including the prophetic office of bearing witness to the truth. Every baptized Christian is thereby commissioned to proclaim the faith, not as a later addition to his Baptism but as part of what Baptism itself confers. Scripture calls the whole body of the baptized a royal priesthood and a holy nation, chosen precisely to proclaim the excellencies of the God who called them out of darkness, which is to say chosen for mission. This means the layman's call to spread the faith does not depend on any special appointment, office, or extraordinary vocation; it is already his by Baptism, written into his identity as a Christian. He does not need to wait to be sent; he was sent at the font, and the sacrament that made him a Christian made him, in the same act, a missionary.

Confirmation Strengthens the Sending

What Baptism began, Confirmation deepens and strengthens, for in Confirmation the baptized Christian is sealed with the gift of the Holy Spirit precisely to equip him for the Christian mission and to strengthen him to spread and defend the faith by word and deed. If Baptism commissions a man, Confirmation arms him, pouring out the strength of the Spirit for the work of witness. This is why Confirmation has always been understood as the sacrament that makes a Christian a mature soldier of Christ, fully equipped to take up his part in the Church's mission; it is the sacrament of Christian mission par excellence. A man who has been confirmed has been given, whether he has ever drawn on it or not, the power of the Holy Spirit for witness, and the sent life is in large part a matter of activating and relying on this gift he already possesses. The grace to be a missionary is not something a man lacks and must somehow acquire; it was poured into him at Confirmation, and waits only to be used.

The Dignity of the Lay Apostolate

Seeing that mission is rooted in Baptism and Confirmation transforms how a man understands his own dignity as a layman, for it means his call to spread the faith is not a lesser or borrowed thing but a genuine apostolate rooted in the sacraments themselves.

The Church speaks of the lay apostolate as a real sharing in the mission of Christ, and she teaches that the layman has his own proper and irreplaceable role, reaching precisely into the places the clergy cannot go: the workplace, the family, the ordinary networks of secular life, the whole vast world of human affairs that the layman inhabits and the priest largely does not. Far from being a second-class participant in a mission that really belongs to the clergy, the layman is the Church's primary presence in the world, sent to sanctify from within the very structures of society where he lives and works. This is a dignity, not a burden, and a man who grasps it stands straighter as a Christian, understanding that he has been entrusted by Christ himself, through his Baptism and Confirmation, with a real and necessary share in the greatest work in the world.

It is worth lingering on the phrase irreplaceable, because it is precisely true and most laymen have never believed it of themselves. The priest cannot sit in the layman's office, cannot stand at his workbench, cannot join his circle of old friends, cannot be present in his marriage and his fatherhood; these places are closed to the clergy and open only to the man who actually lives in them. If Christ is to reach the people in those places, it will be through the layman or not at all, which means the layman is not filling in for a mission that properly belongs to someone else but holding a post that no one else can hold. The whole secular world, where most of human life is actually lived, is entrusted to the laity as their particular field, and in that field they are not auxiliaries but the Church's front line.

CHAPTER THREE

The Field Is Where You Stand

Your Mission Is Your Actual Life

A man who accepts that he is sent may still misunderstand where he is sent, imagining that real mission must happen somewhere else, in some dramatic setting far from his ordinary life, and so concluding that since he is not going to the foreign missions, there is little for him to do. This is a crucial mistake. The mission field of the ordinary Christian is not somewhere distant and exotic; it is exactly where he already is, the concrete circumstances of his actual life, and the first great act of the sent life is simply to recognize the field he is already standing in.

Lift up your eyes, and see that the fields are white for harvest. — John 4:35

The Harvest at Your Feet

When Christ told his disciples to lift up their eyes and see the fields white for harvest, he was pointing not to some distant country but to the people right in front of them, and the same gesture is made to every Christian who thinks the mission is always elsewhere. The harvest is at a man's feet: in the people he already knows, works with, lives among, and encounters every day. His coworkers, his neighbors, his friends, his extended family, the people in his daily orbit, many of them far from God and some of them longing for something they cannot name, these are his mission field, the specific souls he has been placed among and given a chance to reach that no one else has in quite the same way. A man does not need to go anywhere to begin his mission; he needs only to open his eyes to the field he is already in, to see the people around him not as mere background to his life but as the harvest Christ has sent him to, and to recognize that his daily life is thick with missionary opportunity he has been walking past.

The blindness here is worth naming, because it is so easy to fall into. A man can spend years beside a coworker, sharing the small talk of the office, and never once see him as a soul, never wonder where he stands with God, never register that this familiar colleague might be quietly starving for exactly what the man beside him possesses. Familiarity hides the harvest. The people closest to us become so ordinary to us that we stop seeing them as the eternal beings they are, each one with a soul, each one loved by God, each one placed in our path for a reason we have never paused to consider. To lift up one's eyes is first of all to look again at the people one has stopped really seeing, and to recognize in the most familiar faces of one's daily life the very harvest Christ was pointing to.

Your Circumstances Are Your Assignment

The particular circumstances of a man's life, far from being obstacles to his mission or irrelevant to it, are precisely his mission, the specific assignment God has given him. The place he works, the family he belongs to, the neighborhood he lives in, the roles he holds, the relationships that are his, all of these are not the setting in which he waits to do mission someday but the mission itself, the exact field to which he has been sent. God has placed each man where he is on purpose, among these particular people, in these particular circumstances, and has given him access and relationships that are his alone; the influence a man has with his own coworkers, the trust he holds with his own friends, the authority he carries in his own family, these are things no priest or professional missionary could ever have, and they are the raw material of his apostolate. A man's assignment, then, is not to escape his circumstances in order to do mission but to see his circumstances as the mission, and to begin to carry Christ into the exact places where his life already is.

Bloom Where You Are Planted

The practical wisdom of the sent life is captured in the old counsel to bloom where you are planted, to pour one's missionary energy into the actual ground one occupies rather than pining for some other field. There is a persistent temptation to imagine that one's real mission would begin if only the circumstances were different, if one had a different job, a more receptive family, a more exciting opportunity, and so to withhold oneself from the unglamorous field one is actually in. But the man God can use is the one who gives himself to the mission in front of him, who serves and witnesses and loves in the ordinary ground where he has been planted, trusting that this, and not some imagined elsewhere, is where he is meant to bear fruit. The foreign missionary and the quiet layman faithful in his own office are doing the same essential work, each in the field assigned to him, and the layman's field, however ordinary it looks, is no less his mission than the missionary's is. Bloom where you are planted: give yourself fully to the mission field of your actual life, and you will find it is field enough for a lifetime of fruitful apostolate.

CHAPTER FOUR

Witness Before Words

The Mission Your Life Preaches

A man newly awakened to his mission often assumes that it consists chiefly in speaking, in finding the right words to say about the faith, and he may hang back from the whole enterprise because he feels unequipped to argue or explain. But the heart of the sent life is not finally words at all; it is witness, the testimony of a life visibly transformed by Christ, which speaks before a man says anything and carries more weight than anything he could say. Understanding the primacy of witness frees a man for a mission he can actually begin today, whatever his gifts with words.

Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven. — Matthew 5:16

People Watch Before They Listen

Long before the people around a man will listen to anything he says about his faith, they are watching how he lives, and that watching is the real beginning of his witness. They notice whether he is honest when honesty costs him, whether he keeps his temper when others lose theirs, whether he treats the lowly with the same respect as the powerful,

whether there is a peace and a steadiness in him that they lack and half want. These observed qualities, the visible difference that faith makes in how a man actually lives, are his first and most powerful testimony, and they establish whether anything he later says will be believed. A man whose life quietly contradicts his faith has undermined his witness before he opens his mouth; a man whose life visibly embodies his faith has already preached a sermon more convincing than words. This is why the sent life begins not with learning what to say but with becoming the kind of man whose life itself raises the question that words can then answer.

The Testimony Words Cannot Give

There are things a transformed life says that no argument can say, because they are shown rather than stated, and these are often what actually move people toward Christ. A man can argue for the truth of the faith and be met with counter-arguments, but when the people around him see a joy that their pleasures have not given them, a peace that their security has not bought, a love that asks nothing in return, a hope that does not fail when life turns hard, they are confronted with evidence that no debate can refute: the visible fruit of a life lived in Christ. This witness is especially powerful in suffering, when the world watches to see how a believer bears what breaks other men, and a Christian who meets loss or pain with a hope and a peace the world cannot account for preaches, by his bearing alone, a sermon of extraordinary force. The transformed life is the one argument the skeptical world cannot easily dismiss, because it is not a claim to be contested but a reality to be reckoned with, standing there in front of them in the person of a man they know.

Then the Words Can Come

None of this means that words do not matter or that a man never has to speak, for there comes a point where the witness of a life invites the question that only words can answer, and a man must be ready to give it. But the order matters immensely: the life comes first, establishing the credibility and raising the question, and then the words come, naming the Christ to whom the life points. Words spoken from a life that backs them carry a weight that the same words from a hollow life could never have, and a man whose life has already testified has earned the standing to speak. The sent life, then, is not wordless, but it is witness first and words second, the life preaching the opening sermon and the words supplying the explanation when someone, moved by what they have seen, finally asks. This frees a man to begin his mission now, long before he feels articulate about the faith, by simply living it visibly and well, trusting that the witness of his life is already doing the deepest work, and that the words, when they are needed, will come.

CHAPTER FIVE

The Courage to Be Visible

Against the Privatizing of Faith

There is a powerful pressure in modern life to keep one's faith private, to treat religion as a personal matter best not mentioned, to be a Christian quietly and invisibly so as not to make anyone uncomfortable. This pressure is so pervasive that most Christians have simply accepted it, confining their faith to church and home and becoming, in the wider world, indistinguishable from everyone else. But the sent life cannot be lived invisibly, and a central act of courage it requires is the willingness to be known, openly and without apology, as a Christian.

I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. — Romans 1:16

The Pressure to Disappear

The modern world has a settled expectation that religion will be kept private, a personal preference one does not impose on others or bring into the public square, and this expectation presses on every Christian to make his faith invisible. The pressure rarely comes as open hostility; more often it is the subtle sense that mentioning one's faith is awkward, that being openly religious is slightly embarrassing, that the polite and respectful thing is to keep it to oneself. And so most Christians comply, not through any decision to deny their faith but through a thousand small silences, a steady editing of themselves to remove anything that would mark them as believers, until their faith has become entirely invisible to the people among whom they spend their days. The result is a Christianity that has effectively vanished from the public world, present in churches on Sunday but undetectable in the offices, neighborhoods, and friendships where most of life is lived, and a Christian who has, without ever meaning to, hidden the one thing about himself that matters most.

Not Ashamed

Against this pressure to disappear, the sent life requires the courage that Saint Paul named when he said he was not ashamed of the gospel, the willingness to be openly and unmistakably Christian in a world that would prefer one were not. This does not mean being obnoxious, aggressive, or preachy, which repels rather than draws; it means simply being known, letting one's faith be visible, declining the invitation to hide it, being the person whom everyone knows to be a serious Christian. It means not editing God out of

one's conversation, not pretending to share assumptions one does not share, not laughing along with what one finds wrong, not hiding that one goes to Mass or that one's choices are shaped by one's faith. This visibility costs something; it may bring awkwardness, mild ridicule, the loss of a certain social ease, and occasionally real opposition. But a faith that will not be seen is a faith that cannot be a witness, and the courage to be visible, to let oneself be known as a Christian whatever the cost, is the price of the sent life and the condition of any witness at all.

Winsome, Not Obnoxious

The courage to be visible must be paired with the wisdom to be winsome, for there is a way of being openly Christian that repels and a way that draws, and the sent life aims always at the second. The goal is not to be the abrasive believer who makes faith look unattractive, who argues at every turn, who wears his religion as a weapon or a wall, but to be the Christian whose visible faith is so evidently joined to a good and attractive life that it draws people toward rather than driving them away. This means holding one's faith openly but with warmth, being known as a believer but also as a man people are glad to be around, letting one's convictions be clear without being combative, and making the faith look like what it is, good news, rather than a grievance or a judgment. The visible Christian who is also kind, joyful, and genuinely interested in others does far more for the mission than either the invisible Christian who hides or the obnoxious one who repels. To be openly Christian and genuinely winsome at once is the art of the sent life, and it is this combination, visibility joined to warmth, that makes a man's open faith not a barrier but a door.

CHAPTER SIX

Sent Together, Not Alone

The Mission Is Never Solitary

For all that the sent life calls each man personally, it is never a solitary endeavor, a lone Christian carrying the mission by himself against the world. The mission is given to a people, carried out in communion, and sustained by the fellowship of other believers, and a man who tries to live the sent life entirely alone will find it a far heavier and more fragile thing than it was ever meant to be. Understanding the communal nature of the mission both lightens a man's burden and corrects a dangerous tendency toward a lone-wolf Christianity that cannot finally stand.

They devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. — Acts 2:42

The Mission Belongs to a People

The mission was never given to isolated individuals but to a body, the Church, and each Christian carries out his part within and on behalf of that body rather than as a freelancer working alone. This matters because it locates a man's personal mission within something larger and sustaining: he is not a solitary agent who must somehow evangelize the world by himself, but a member of a vast missionary people, contributing his particular part to a work that the whole Church carries together across the centuries. The pressure is off a man to accomplish everything; he has only to be faithful in his own corner, knowing that he labors alongside countless others and as part of a mission far greater than himself. And the fruit of his labor is not finally his own achievement but the work of Christ through his whole body, which frees a man from both the pride of thinking the mission depends on him and the despair of thinking he must carry it alone. He is one member of a sent people, and his part, however small, is real precisely because it is joined to the whole.

We Keep Each Other Going

The practical reason the mission must be communal is that no man can sustain the sent life alone for long, and the fellowship of other believers is what keeps each one going through the discouragements and pressures that would wear down a solitary Christian. The man who tries to live a visible, missionary faith entirely on his own, with no community of fellow believers to strengthen him, is terribly exposed: isolated against the constant pressure of a contrary world, with no one to encourage him when his resolve flags, no one to counsel him when he is unsure, no one to lift him when he falls. This is why Christians have always needed one another, why the first believers devoted themselves to fellowship as well as to teaching and prayer, and why a man serious about the sent life must not attempt it in isolation but must root himself in a community of fellow Christians who will strengthen, encourage, and sustain him. A brotherhood of men pursuing the sent life together accomplishes and endures what no one of them could alone, each lending the others strength on the days their own fails. The mission is a team endeavor, and the Christian who tries to go it alone has made his hard calling nearly impossible.

The Community Is Itself a Witness

There is a further reason the mission is communal: the community of believers is itself one of the most powerful witnesses the faith possesses, for the quality of love among Christians preaches to the watching world in a way no individual can. Christ himself said that the world would know his disciples by their love for one another, making the visible love within the Christian community a central part of its testimony; a community marked by genuine love, joy, and mutual care is an argument for the faith that outsiders find deeply compelling, a glimpse of a way of being together that they lack and long for. This means a man's participation in a living Christian community is not a retreat from mission but itself a form of it, a contribution to the collective witness that the fellowship of believers gives. The sent life, then, calls a man not only to carry Christ individually into his own corner of the world but to help build and sustain the kind of Christian community whose shared life is itself a radiant witness, so that the world, seeing how these Christians love one another, is drawn toward the Lord who binds them together.

CHAPTER SEVEN

A Life That Points Beyond Itself

The Sent Life as the Meaning of a Life

We come finally to the deepest truth about the sent life, which is that it is not one activity among others in a Christian's life but the very meaning and purpose of that life, the reason a man was saved and formed and left in this world at all. A man might think of his mission as a part of his Christian life, something he does alongside working and raising a family and pursuing his interests. But the sent life is larger than that; it is the orientation of a whole existence toward God and others, the shape a Christian life takes when it understands what it is finally for.

We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. — 2 Corinthians 5:20

Why You Were Left Here

A man might ask why God, having saved him, does not simply take him immediately to heaven, and the answer reveals the whole purpose of the sent life: he was left in the world to be a witness, an ambassador, a bearer of Christ to others who have not yet found him. The time between a man's conversion and his death is not an aimless waiting for heaven but a commission, a span given to him precisely so that through him God might reach others, so that his life might point beyond itself to the Christ he serves. This is why he is still here: not merely to get himself to heaven, which is already secured, but to help get

others there, to be the means by which God's appeal is made to the people around him. Saint Paul's image is exact: the Christian is an ambassador for Christ, one through whom God himself makes his appeal to the world, and the whole purpose of his remaining in this life is bound up in that embassy. To grasp this is to understand one's own existence rightly, as a life given not for oneself alone but as an instrument of God's reach to others.

Sanctity and Mission Are One

The sent life also dissolves a false separation that troubles many earnest Christians, the notion that growing in personal holiness and reaching out in mission are two different and competing projects, as though a man must choose between becoming holy and being apostolic. In truth these are one, for the holiness a man grows in is precisely what equips and empowers his mission, and his mission is precisely the pouring out of the holiness he has received. A man becomes a more effective witness exactly as he becomes more holy, because his transformed life is his deepest testimony; and his mission, far from competing with his sanctification, drives it forward, forcing him to rely on grace, to grow in love, to become the man his witness requires. The saints were the greatest missionaries not despite their holiness but because of it, their sanctity overflowing naturally into apostolic fruitfulness. A man need not choose, then, between becoming holy and being sent; the two are a single movement, the inward growth in Christ overflowing outward into the mission, so that the holier a man becomes the more apostolic he grows, and the more apostolic he is the more he is driven to holiness.

The Life Fully Given

The sent life, finally, is simply the Christian life fully given, held back from nothing, poured out toward God and others without reserve, and it is in this full self-giving that a man finds the purpose and the joy for which he was made. There is a kind of Christian who keeps his faith for himself, a private possession carefully guarded, and his faith remains small and his life strangely unfulfilled; and there is the Christian who gives his faith away, pours himself out in witness and love and service, holds nothing back from the mission, and finds, in the giving, a largeness and a joy the hoarder never knows. For it is a law of the spiritual life, taught by Christ himself, that a man finds his life precisely by losing it, by giving it away in love, and the sent life is this law lived out, the deliberate pouring out of oneself in mission that paradoxically fills a man rather than emptying him. The life fully given to the mission is not a diminished life but the fullest possible one, the life that has found its purpose and its joy in becoming, as its Lord did, a gift poured out for others. This is the sent life in its completion: a man who has understood that he was made to be given, and has given himself, and has found in that giving the very meaning he was made for.

CONCLUSION

Go

As the Father has sent me, Christ said, even so I am sending you. This book has been an unfolding of that one word, sending, and of all that it means for an ordinary Christian to discover that it was spoken to him. We have seen that mission is not someone else's job but every Christian's, given at Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation; that the mission field is not somewhere distant but exactly where a man already stands; that his witness is carried first by his life and then by his words; that the sent life requires the courage to be visibly Christian in a world that prefers faith hidden; that the mission is never solitary but carried together as a sent people; and that this sent life is not a part of the Christian life but its very meaning and deepest joy.

What all of it comes to is a single change of self-understanding: from spectator to participant, from receiver to giver, from a Christian who has a private faith to a Christian who knows he has been sent. This change is not finally about doing a great many new things; it is about seeing one's whole existing life through new eyes, as a mission field, an embassy, a commission, and then beginning, in the ordinary circumstances one already inhabits, to live as one sent. The coworker becomes a soul to be reached, the ordinary day becomes an occasion of witness, the whole of a man's life becomes what it was always meant to be, a life that points beyond itself to Christ.

So go. Not somewhere else, but into the life you already have, the people you already know, the field where you already stand, and begin to live as the missionary you became at your Baptism. Let your life be a visible witness before you ever speak a word; have the courage to be openly and winsomely Christian; root yourself among fellow believers who will sustain you; and give yourself to the mission without reserve, trusting that in the giving you will find the very meaning you were made for. You have been sent, as surely as the first disciples were sent from that upper room, and the world you have been sent to is waiting, in the ordinary people all around you, for a Christian who finally knows that the command was spoken to him. Go, therefore. You are an ambassador for Christ, and through you God himself means to make his appeal.

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