

# THE GREAT SENDING

## Study 1: The Sending Christ – John 20

Death is the enemy of mankind and the just punishment for each person's sin. (Romans 6:23). The mortality rate is and will always be 100%. No amount of effort, medical technology, power or riches can escape the clutches of death.

Christ rose from the dead because death could no longer hold Him. And we no longer have to fear death because Christ has triumphed over it. Death is no longer such a fearsome enemy because in Christ, we no longer have to fear the punishment that comes with death. Jesus took that punishment that we deserved on Himself.

*"O death, where is your victory? O death where is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the Law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. (1 Corinthians 15:55-57)*

1 Corinthians 15 is often called the "Resurrection Chapter" of the New Testament. John 20 could bear that name as well, for in this chapter we hear of the empty tomb and Jesus' appearances to Mary Magdalene and His disciples.

1. What strikes you in the account of Mary Magdalene finding the empty tomb and Jesus' conversation with her?
2. What is significant about the fact that Peter and John are told by Mary Magdalene that the tomb is empty? Note that Peter and John went to see for themselves.
3. What grabs your attention in the account of Jesus appearing to the disciples in vv.19-23?
4. Why do you think the disciples were so afraid that they locked the doors "for fear of the Jews"? (v.19)
5. Notice that three times in this chapter, Jesus says to the disciples, "Peace be with you." What did Jesus mean by that?

6. What might people today fear? What kind of peace do people today need?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
7. What strikes you in the account of Jesus' appearance to His disciples when Thomas was with them? (vv.24-29)
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
8. Vv.24-25. Put yourself in Thomas' shoes. What do you suppose Thomas was thinking?  
Some possibilities: You guys are crazy! Don't break my heart again!  
I want to believe, but . . . . Seeing is believing.
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
9. How does Jesus deal with Thomas' doubts? What can we learn from this as we talk to people who have doubts about the Gospel?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
10. Why is the resurrection of Jesus so important in the great sending of v.21?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
11. Do vv.30-31 fit into the sending of the disciples and our being sent as well? If so, how do they fit?

*The Great Sending: Study 2 - Who Do People Say Jesus Is?* - Matthew 16:13-20

**Introductory thought:** Have you ever been mistaken for someone else? How did that make you feel? Why?

**Read Matthew 16:13-20**

What simple question does Jesus ask and how do the disciples respond?

What lies behind these different answers? How do they reflect the expectations of the people? How do they reflect their understanding of who Jesus is?

Jesus replies with the question: But who do you say that I am? How does Simon respond? How does Jesus receive his answer?

What is important about Simon's response regarding who Jesus is? How does this designation for Jesus clarify his identity and get at the heart of his purpose?

**But who do you say that I am?**

The question is posed to us and our understanding. How do we do at understanding who this Jesus is? Where can we grow? How is recognizing our need for growth important?

As we consider sharing our faith, we realize that this question remains important. Who do people say that Jesus is? Discuss in groups the perceptions that are out there regarding Jesus. If at all possible, use real experience with conversations with unbelievers. Secondly, consider things you have heard indirectly or online.

After you discuss the perceptions that are out there, consider the misconceptions that are present. What are they?

What gets in the way of people seeing Jesus as Jesus?

What openings for sharing or informing regarding Jesus' true identity and purpose might there be given these misconceptions?

What aspects of Jesus' identity might be important to address as we engage and share in the conversation? What factors might shape the language we use communicating Jesus' identity?

**Jesus responds**

How does Jesus engage the disciples and us to help inform our understanding of him? What do we see and hear from the Scriptures to help us grow?

What challenges are present as you engage the unbelieving friend/contact in conversation?

**Closing Thoughts and Prayer**

*The Great Sending: Study 3: Christ Crucified, John 18 and 19*



“A piece of ancient Roman graffiti depicts a Christian kneeling before a donkey-headed figure on a cross. The caption reads, “Alexamenos worships [his] god.” The graffiti ridicules Christians who worship a convicted criminal dying on a cross. It is no wonder that artistic depictions of the crucified Christ in the early years of Christianity are rare. It is hard to see victory in an execution.” - Dr. Dean Nadasdy

1. The Apostle John, who witnessed Jesus’ arrest, the Sanhedrin trial, and the crucifixion did not see Jesus’ death as an embarrassment. How does John present the crucifixion?
  - a. John 3:14
  - b. John 8:28
  - c. John 12:31-33
2. Read John 18-19. In this eyewitness account of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and execution, how does Jesus demonstrate that in His suffering He is totally in charge and being glorified as the Son of God?
3. Where do you see crosses today? How are crosses displayed and who is displaying them?
4. How do you think our culture sees the cross today?
5. In the mission of God, Christian witnesses lift high the cross of Jesus Christ as a sign of victory, not defeat, and as the display of God’s love for the world. How might we engage with our culture’s current use and understanding of the cross as we are sent to proclaim the glory of Christ crucified to all peoples?
6. What comfort and hope do you receive from the cross of Christ as God sends you into the world with the message of Christ crucified?



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1. The Apostle John, who witnessed Jesus’ arrest, the Sanhedrin trial, and the crucifixion did not see Jesus’ death as an embarrassment. How does John present the crucifixion?
  - a. John 3:14  
This verse references Numbers 21:8-9. Looking to Jesus lifted up in crucifixion is how people shall be saved from their sins.
  - b. John 8:28  
Here Jesus refers to himself as “I Am”, which is a reference to God’s personal name revealed in Exodus 3:14, “I Am Who I Am”. Jesus is saying that his being lifted up will be a sign of his divinity.
  - c. John 12:31-33  
Jesus being lifted up on the cross proclaims him the victor over the forces of evil in the world and his crucifixion will draw all people unto him. Dr. Dean Nadasdy describes this passage as showing Jesus on the cross as the “enthronement of the Messiah King.”
2. Read John 18-19. In this eyewitness account of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and execution, how does Jesus demonstrate that in his suffering he is totally in charge and being glorified as the Son of God?

Some possible answers are:

Jesus is declared a king by Pilate.

In John’s Gospel, there is no Simon to help carry the cross; Jesus bears it on his own.

Jesus shows no sign of being delirious on the cross.

Even in his dying, Jesus takes care of those he loves.

Fully conscious, he gives a cry of victory, "It is finished."

In all aspects of his Passion, John demonstrates that Jesus willingly and authoritatively fulfills the mission given him by his Father.

3. Where do you see crosses today? How are crosses displayed and who is displaying them?

Crosses can be seen almost everywhere in our society. They are not just relegated to the use of Christians. Crosses are found as symbolic displays in music videos and movies, such as the end of the Charlton Heston movie, *Omega Man*, the Clint Eastwood movie, *Gran Torino*, and the third installment of *The Matrix* series. It is common to see crosses worn as necklaces and even at times made of gold and covered with diamonds. Crosses are worked into clothing designs, logos, and tattoos. Wooden crosses are staked into the ground at places people have died in road accidents. A cross even stands at the top of the Scientology headquarters in Los Angeles.

4. How do you think our culture sees the cross today?

It seems as if the cross is seen much more as a piece of art or a fashion symbol. At times it appears to be viewed as a sign of one's willful self-sacrifice or suffering either for others or for one's own personal glory. Others use it simply as a good luck charm or means to ward off evil.

5. In the mission of God, Christian witnesses lift high the cross of Jesus Christ as a sign of victory, not defeat, and as the display of God's love for the world. How might we engage with our culture's current use and understanding of the cross as we are sent to proclaim the glory of Christ crucified to all peoples?

A simple way to initiate a conversation to proclaim Christ crucified is to ask someone displaying or using a cross what the cross means to him or her. If the individual gives an answer that does not mention Jesus' sacrifice, consider asking if the person knows about the glory of the cross. If the answer is no, then you can share Jesus' glorification as he was lifted up on the cross, how on the cross Jesus beat evil and death.

6. What comfort and hope do you receive from the cross of Christ as God sends you into the world with the message of Christ crucified?

As we share Christ crucified with others, we ought to expect to receive some form of rejection or suffering on account of our association to Christ's suffering. We can take comfort in the fact that as we share in Christ's suffering we are also sharing in Christ's glory. We look to Christ lifted up on the cross for our salvation. As we proclaim the glory and victory of Christ crucified, we also proclaim the glory and victory of Christ risen from the dead. Christ crucified is not divorced from Christ's resurrection from the dead. It is in Christ crucified that we know we have an all-sufficient Savior. No matter what ridicule or shame we might receive for proclaiming Christ, like Alexamenos, we still worship our crucified king, because we know that the cross demonstrates the power and wisdom of God. (1 Corinthians 1:21-25)

*The Great Sending: Study 4: A Christ for All Peoples, Luke 4:14-30*

Introductory Comment: *The Great Sending* is about seeing and knowing who Jesus is, that we might be led (a) to place our trust in Him unconditionally, letting Him be the Lord of our lives, and knowing the grace, salvation, and security of that Lordship, and (b) to seek to share Him with all people.

1. Getting Started: What does this unit of Scripture tell us about Jesus that would draw us to trust in Him?
  - (a) What do vv. 14-15 suggest led Jesus to return to His roots, to Galilee? What kind of response did He evoke?
  - (b) What do we learn about Jesus from verse 16? In what way would this be a recommendation for Him?
  - (c) What impressions do verses 17-22a make on you about Jesus? This is presented in Luke's Gospel as Jesus' initial speech. What kind of a leader do you think it suggests?
2. In Luke 4:21, Jesus asserts that the Scriptures He has read from Isaiah 61:1,2 (with a line from Is. 58:6 included) has been fulfilled today. To know who Jesus is, what is Jesus saying about Himself when
  - (a) He says that the Spirit of the Lord has anointed Him? What claim is He making? What will lead Him, if He is being led by the Spirit?
  - (b) What is He saying about Himself, when He says that His assignment is
    - to proclaim good news to the poor?
    - to proclaim liberty to the captives?
    - to announce recovery of sight to the blind?
    - to set at liberty those who are oppressed?
    - to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor?

When you consider Jesus as being that type of Anointed One (Messiah, Christ), who would He appeal to? Who might not be attracted to Him?

3. What do you sense is embedded in the crowd's question in v. 22b, "Is not this Joseph's son?" --and especially in light of Jesus' comment in vv. 23 and 24? What does Jesus detect the hometown folks most likely want Him to do? How does that become a barrier to them really knowing Jesus and letting Him be their Lord? What does it seem they want to turn Jesus into being? How will that likely prevent them from having open eyes to sharing him with others?
4. Jesus continues His remarks in vv. 25-27. He draws on their very own Scripture to stress how God sent the prophet Elijah to an outsider--a widow from Zarephath in the territory of Sidon to provide food in a time of famine and how God sent Elisha to Naaman the Syrian to cleanse him of his leprosy. What is Jesus' point? What does He want His fellow townspeople to realize? Who has Jesus come for? just them? Unfortunately, what's their reaction? What do they seek to do?

In this inaugural speech in His hometown synagogue, Jesus is making clear that He is the Messiah who has come for all people. How might the reaction of the folks at Nazareth alert us to what we might do to block the Lord from getting through to us or our community?

Discuss the questions on page 65 of *The Great Sending*. You may close with the prayer, p. 66.

*The Great Sending:* Study 5: **Jesus is the Son of God**, John 1:29-34

Brief discussion to begin: We know Christ; what does that mean in our lives? Do we know people who don't know the Gospel? Does that concern us? John knew who Jesus was, too. Let us see what he did.

John 1: 29-34

vs. 29 John says, "Look, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world."

A. Who is this Lamb of God? What does "lamb" signify?

1:14 "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the One and Only, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth."

- a. Why is it important that Jesus became man?
- b. Why is the "one and only" important?
- c. Where did he come from? Is that significant?
- d. What does "full of grace and truth" mean for us?

1:18 "No one has ever seen God, but God the One and Only, who is at the Father's side, has made him known."

a. Who is "God the One and Only"? What has He done?

3:16 "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that he who believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life."

a. Why would an unbeliever perish?

20:31 "But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that by believing you may have life in his name."

- a. Why were these (signs) written?
- b. Why believe?
- c. What is "life in his name"?

1:34 "He is the Son of God"

a. What do the titles "Lamb of God" and "Son of God" tell us about Jesus?

B. How did John get to know that Jesus, the Son of God, was the Lamb of God, who took away the sin of the world?

1:33 "I would not have known him, except that the one who sent me to baptize with water told me, 'The man on whom you see the Spirit come down and remain is he who will baptize with the Holy Spirit.'"

C. How do we get the faith?

D. Why did God send John the Baptist to baptize with water?

1:31 "I myself did not know him, but the reason I came baptizing with water was that he might be revealed to Israel."

E. God made Jesus known to John. John knew he (Jesus) was the Son of God who took away the sins of the world. What did he do? He testified. He told others.

1:34 "I have seen and I testify that this is the Son of God."

F. We know who Jesus is. What should we do for those people whom we know do not know the Gospel?

G. Why is knowing and just being content in the fact that we know Jesus, contrary to what John is telling us?

H. What is the urgency of this text (John 1: 29-34) in today's world?

I. How is "Look the Lamb of God" significant to the world today? North Georgia? Or is it irrelevant?

**Opening Prayer**

**Exploring the Word to Understand Jesus**

Break up into groups. If you do not have enough for groups, focus on one grouping of passages. Once each group has had opportunity to consider their passages and questions, the whole class can come together and discuss what they have found.

<i>Group 1</i>	<i>Group 2</i>	<i>Group 3</i>
<p>Read John 3:14-21. How does this passage highlight the heart of God?</p> <p>How does it shape our understanding of who Jesus is?</p>	<p>Read John 8:23-49. As you read this passage, what do we learn about Jesus, His mission and His place as centerpiece of God's mission?</p> <p>Where does such a lesson get taught most clearly?</p>	<p>Read John 12:32-34. What does Jesus do on the cross?</p> <p>What does this teach us about His role in God's mission? about God's mission among us?</p> <p>Read John 12:44-50. How does Jesus' mission relate to the Father's?</p> <p>What does that dynamic mean for our witness?</p>

*While the questions and passages are different, the overarching goal is for the participants to see that Jesus affirms that He is about His Father's mission and that the mission is centered in His going to the cross.*

*John 3:14-21 highlights the heart of God as we see His desire for people not to perish but rather to have eternal life. He sends His Son to deliver the world from condemnation and darkness to life and light. This desire of God is worked out through the lifting up of the Son.*

*Seeing God's love for the world, we realize that the Son is about the Father's mission. He carries out God's desire for life by going to the cross and suffering death. He is central to the work.*

*In John 8:23-49 we see that Jesus is one with the Father's mission. He does what the Father has Him do. This event is seen most readily in the cross (8:28). This activity becomes the centerpiece or the pivot point as we hear Jesus' call to have the disciples abiding in His word. Here, in the word, the disciples are set free. The freedom is from sin. Recognizing that freedom, recognizing the way of life, is abiding in the word of Jesus, i.e., the word of the Father. The word of the Father and the activity that flows from it stand in stark contrast to the self-centered drive of sinful humanity. We see this contrast in the world's perception of the cross and the reality of the cross as a demonstration of God's self-giving love and his desire to free people to self-giving love.*

*John 12:32-34 highlights that Jesus draws all people to Himself on the cross. This activity reflects the Father's mission of saving the world (John 12:44-50). Jesus acts on the Father's authority and in light of his mission.*

### **Understanding Jesus in Relationship to the Mission**

In John's Gospel the connection between Jesus' mission and the mission of the Father has been highlighted. Consider Galatians 4:4-7 and 1 John 4:9-16. How do these passages highlight a similar relationship?

*Galatians 4:4-7 highlights that God sent his Son with a purpose, i.e., to redeem those under the law so that they might have adoption as sons. 1 John 4:9-16 highlights that the sending of the Son was the product of God's love that desired His goal for us: that is life through Him, now and forever. God's love works through the Son; the Father's mission is carried out by the Son.*

As you recognize the relationship between the mission of Jesus and the Father, what else do these passages from Galatians and 1 John highlight? What is Jesus in relationship to the Father's mission?

*Jesus is the pivotal key. He is the one who not only does the work of the Father but brings us into relationship to the mission as well. Note that we receive adoption as sons. The implications of being a son is certainly being an heir, but to what are we an heir? We are heirs to life and life is intimately tied to the mission of God. We are sons even as the Son is a son; as the Son is about the mission, so are the sons. Note the implications presented in 1 John 4:11: "Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another." The mission continues and Jesus is that pivotal piece (1 John 4:19 as well – "we love because He first loved us").*

What is your relationship to Jesus and the Father's mission?

*In and through Christ, we are brought into the mission! We are called to be about it even as Jesus was about the mission. That may look different than going to the cross, but it does call us to take up our cross and follow Him.*

How do these passages and the heart and fulfillment of God's mission inform our personal perspective of mission in our lives?

*This question seeks to get people to really consider the mission's implications on their perspective on the task at hand, the opportunities in front of them, and what that might look like in their life.*

How does Jesus being the centerpiece/pivot inform our perspective on the mission as a congregation? How is it empowering? How is it challenging? How is it instructive?

*Here we seek to ask the question from the corporate perspective. Consider how it shapes a congregation's understanding of her purpose. What does it mean for use of budget resources? What does it mean for how time is spent? This assessment does not mean that particular things are necessarily bad; it does suggest that we need to approach things with the lens of God's mission and the rationale that flows from God's mission. It is a challenging task because it calls us away from what is easy, convenient, comfortable, etc. and to activities that we think will serve the ultimate goal of God's desire to bring people into relationship with Him through Jesus so that they can be sustained in the life Jesus gives.*

### **Closing Thoughts and Prayer**

**Opening Prayer**

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What is your relationship to Jesus and the Father’s mission?

How do these passages and the heart and fulfillment of God’s mission inform our personal perspective of mission in our lives?

How does Jesus being the centerpiece/pivot inform our perspective on the mission as a congregation? How is it empowering? How is it challenging? How is it instructive?

**Closing Thoughts and Prayer**

## *The Great Sending: Study 7: **Date with Destiny**, 2 Corinthians 5, Leaders Guide*

### Opening Notes:

- +All of the aspects that are in the teacher notes, but not in the student handout, are in italics.*
- +This guide is to help the Bible teacher prepare and facilitate. The notes here are not meant to be exhaustive, as there may be other things that God shows in the text that you may wish to bring forth. You will often know the participants in the Bible Study and the local ministry context, so adaptations may be made along those lines.*
- +This lesson is aimed toward a single, one-hour class session. Modifications may need to be made based on the time that you have available in your ministry setting.*

### Opening Prayer"

*The leader may wish to open the class in prayer or have a participant do so. The Collect of the Word may be prayed: Blessed Lord, You have caused all Holy Scriptures to be written for our learning. Grant that we may so hear them, read, mark, learn, and inwardly digest them that, by patience and comfort of Your holy Word, we may embrace and ever hold fast the blessed hope of everlasting life; through Jesus Christ, our Lord. Amen.*

### Introduction:

*The leader may read this introductory paragraph or have a volunteer from the class read it.* In these studies on *The Great Sending* we have been learning about the *Missio Dei*, the sending of God. Jesus Christ is central to this mission. There would be no mission without Jesus dying for the sins of the world. Jesus as true man and true God, dies as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world and rises to victory over sin, death and the devil. He calls and sends His disciples into the world with the mission of spreading the glorious and saving Gospel. Without Jesus there is no mission to be sent on, and without His people there is no one to send on the mission. All have a "date with destiny." But at times we likely feel inadequate for this mission. How do we overcome these doubts and fears? We look to God's Word and go with God the Holy Spirit.

### Reading of 2 Corinthians 5:

*It is helpful to read the entire text to gain a grasp of the context and breadth. As you will see below certain sections will be read again for further focus. If you have a strong reader as a participant in the class, have them read the text, or it could be divided into parts, or read by the leader if no strong readers are present.*

### Questions for Study and Discussion:

1. What challenges do we see in our local congregations for fulfilling the mission of spreading the Gospel?

*Answers will vary. However, every congregation will have some type of challenges that they see as barriers to fulfilling God's mission of sharing the Gospel with others. These could include (but by no means are limited to) physical plant issues, a demographic of parishioners that does not match the community around them, financial challenges, or a pastoral vacancy.*

2. In what ways might we, as individuals, feel inadequate in going forth on God's sending mission?

*Answers will vary. Possible things that may be brought forward could include not knowing what to say, health challenges, fear of rejection, or a "shy" personality.*

3. Read again verses 1-6 of 2 Corinthians 5. What words of comfort and truth does God have for us here in answering some of these challenges we may have identified?

*As the book says, we have "leaky buildings". Our earthy tents (or tabernacles) are fallen and "break down." But God has not left us naked. He has clothed us and promised us an eternal tent. This is our destiny. What we lack in physical and material resources, He has more than provided for. We are not on the mission alone. God has given us the Holy Spirit.*

4. The word "faith" is one that we Lutherans often use. Read verse 7 and discuss the role that faith plays in the sending and mission.

*Faith, of course, is vital to the mission. If we do not have faith, we have nothing to share and no reason to share it. But through faith, God has given us what we need. If we only look at the challenges before us (brought out in questions 1 and 2), then we are only using our earthly sight. By the Holy Spirit working faith in us, we walk with this confidence knowing that God is with us and in control of eternal destiny.*

5. What aspects can we draw from verses 8-15 regarding our motivation for going forth in the mission of sharing Christ with the world?

*There are many things that can be drawn out of these verses in terms of our motivation and the reason for sharing the Gospel on this sending. Whatever comes our way, even if it is physical death, we will still be with the Lord (v.8). In all times and places, we seek to labor for/please the Lord (v.9). Verse 10 reminds us that "we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive what is due for what he has done in the body, whether good or evil." With Scriptures we know that we are not saved by our works but by faith alone.(Eph. 2:8) The prospect of all of us appearing before the judgment seat of Christ, however, powerfully asks us, "What have we done on His mission to share His saving grace with others? We fear and love God. We know the terrible fate that awaits those who reject Christ and remain in their sins. We seek to "persuade" others by the power of the Holy Spirit (v.11). We go forth not for our own glory and pride, but in the service of God. This is our cause (vv. 12-13). Christ died for us and we die to sin. The Gospel motivates us to share Jesus with others (v.14). Jesus died for us and we no longer live for ourselves (v. 15). Verse 15 will be discussed more in the next question.*

6. In St. Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus summarizes all the commandments in two: love God above all else and love your neighbor as yourself. Especially in light of verse 15 what does this have to say to us about going forth in the mission?

*It will be helpful to read the text from Matthew 22. Let the participants discuss the meaning and beauty of these verses. This question is focusing on the aspect of "you shall love your neighbor as yourself." We are no longer living for ourselves, but want to love and serve others as Jesus*

*died for them as well. How can we truly love our neighbor if we don't share the Gospel with them, the one thing they truly need for forgiveness, life, and salvation?*

7. Give and discuss some examples of how you, or another person, has radically changed. In light of verses 16-19, Romans 6:1-11 and St. John 3:1-7, what radical change takes place when one is brought to faith?

*The examples will vary. It may be helpful to have something that you can share as the leader to "get the ball rolling" if no one jumps in with an example. The examples could be regarding yourself, someone you know, or even a well-known historical or contemporary figure. The key idea is that the transformation wrought by the Gospel is radical. Sometimes we don't consider this enough if we are long-time church members. But here in 2 Corinthians conversion is described as being a new "creature" or "creation." Jesus tells Nicodemus one must be "born again." Romans 6 points us to Baptism: death of the old sinful man and the rising of the new creation. This points us to what God wants to do as we share His message. And it points us to overcoming any fears or doubts we may have about our ability to go on the mission. God has made us a whole, new, born again creation in Him!*

8. What is an ambassador? What does it mean to be "ambassadors for Christ" in verse 20?

*An ambassador is a representative. It involves one who is sent to a location to represent someone or an organization. It implies having authority to speak for the person or entity one is representing. It could be helpful to use the example of the United States having ambassadors in nations around the world. The connections to being sent on God's mission of witness to Christ are clear. We are Christ's ambassadors in this fallen world.*

9. Read verse 21. What does this one single verse teach us about the sending of God's mission and our "date with destiny"?

*This is a rich, deep, and powerful verse. It may be especially helpful to get some reactions and insights from the participants. This verse points us to the central truth of Christianity: God died for sinners. Even though Jesus never sinned, He was made to "be" sin in that He took on all the sins of the world. By His atonement for sin and us receiving that forgiveness, we are made righteous. That our "date with destiny" would be eternal life with God and His people is only possible because of this.*

Closing Prayer:

*The leader may wish to close in prayer or have a participant do so. The prayer provided at the end of study 7 in *The Great Sending* may be prayed: Dear Lord, as we have been brought back from the dead to our eternal destiny of life by Christ Jesus, give us daily the strength to be about Your mission, that everyone within our reach may know the direction of their destiny. Give us mouths to speak, and wisdom to proclaim Your message as ambassadors for Christ, in whose name we pray. Amen.*

## *The Great Sending: Study 7: Date with Destiny, 2 Corinthians 5*

### Opening Prayer

#### Introduction

In these studies on *The Great Sending*, we have been learning about the *Missio Dei*, the sending of God. Jesus Christ is central to this mission. There would be no mission without Jesus dying for the sins of the world. Jesus as true man and true God, dies as the perfect sacrifice for the sins of the world and rises to victory over sin, death and the devil. He calls and sends His disciples into the world with the mission of spreading the glorious and saving Gospel. Without Jesus there is no mission to be sent on, and without His people there is no one to send on the mission. All have a “date with destiny.” But at times we likely feel inadequate for this mission. How do we overcome these doubts and fears? We look to God’s Word and go with God the Holy Spirit.

#### Reading of 2 Corinthians 5

#### Questions for Study and Discussion

1. What challenges do we see in our local congregations for fulfilling the mission of spreading the Gospel?
2. In what ways might we, as individuals, feel inadequate in going forth on God’s sending mission?
3. Read again verses 1-6 of 2 Corinthians 5. What words of comfort and truth does God have for us here in answering some of these challenges we may have identified?
4. The word “faith” is one that we Lutherans often use. Read verse 7 and discuss the role that faith plays in the sending and mission.
5. What insights can we draw from verses 8-15 regarding our motivation for going forth on the mission of sharing Christ with the world?
6. In St. Matthew 22:36-40 Jesus summarizes all the commandments in two: love God above all else and love your neighbor as yourself. Especially in light of verse 15, what does this have to say to us about going forth in the mission?
7. Give and discuss some examples of how you, or another person, has radically changed. In light of verses 16-19, Romans 6:1-11 and St. John 3:1-7, what radical change takes place when one is brought to faith?
8. What is an ambassador? What does it mean to be “ambassadors for Christ” in verse 20?
9. Read verse 21. What does this one single verse teach us about the sending of God’s mission and our “date with destiny”?

#### Closing Prayer