

Scripture: Matthew 10:1-15

Title: "Can't Get There From Here"

I think I've mentioned before there was a time in my life when I worked as a courier in Charlotte. Now, I am not from Charlotte originally. I am from Huntsville, Alabama. I did not know Charlotte that well, but I was learning – the hard way. The experience was very much like a trial by fire. My boss would give me directions over the phone from place to place and I would write them down. But if he gave me places to pick up or deliver out of order from the way he told me the day before; I was lost. I was totally lost. It was like one of those old timey movies where the city fella is lost and asks a country bumpkin for directions. The country boy looks at the stuck up city boy and says, "No. Ya can't get there from here." Then one day I passed this map store on Queens Boulevard near the CMC main hospital. I bought a map book and once I could see how all of the pieces went together my life got much better. My life got better because I could finally see and understand how all of the various streets came together. Once I understood that I was able to make my pickups and deliveries without being fussed at by my boss.

In Matthew 10:1-15 Jesus sends out the 12 disciples; Simon-Peter and his brother Andrew, James and John the sons of Zebedee, Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector, James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Cananean and Judas Iscariot. Now before Jesus sends out the twelve Jesus gives the them gifts of the Holy Spirit. Jesus gives these 12 disciples authority over unclean spirits to cast them out. Jesus gives the disciples the ability to heal every disease and every infirmity. Jesus blessed and equipped these 12 disciples for the work Jesus had in mind for them to do. Then Jesus sends out these twelve disciples to, "the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt 10:6).

Sisters and brothers; what made those people lost sheep? (pause) Were they actually lost? (pause) Had they forgotten the way home? (pause) well... in a sense... yes. At this time in history there were still very many people who were taught about God through word of mouth. They had an oral tradition. It was the practice of Jewish mothers and the synagogues that people should memorize God's law and be able to recite it word for word. The children would sit around their Jewish mothers while they made bread or washed clothes and the mothers would recite Torah to the children. The children would then take turns reciting it back to their mothers. If a child got even one word wrong the mother would correct them and they would start again. (pause) Think about that for a minute. How many of us can recite even five Scriptures off the top of our heads. I confess that even when I quote Scripture most of the time it is not word for word unless I have it written down. More often than not I quote from the New Revised Standard Edition... it's an abridgement. (pause) However, this is the foundation most of Israel had when it came to God's word. And yet, there were still a ton of people not following God's word. They had head knowledge about what God's Law said, but they didn't understand it; and way too few people were trying to live it out. So you see,... in a sense... they were lost.

Brothers and sisters, I would argue that today we are even more lost than the lost sheep Jesus sent the twelve disciples to find. The children of Israel were actively taught from a very young age the black and white letter of God's law by word of mouth. They could quote whole passages of Scripture off the top of their heads. (pause) Today, we live in a society that is largely Biblically illiterate. We do not even know what is in our Bibles. (pause) How are we going to follow God's direction for our lives if we don't even know what is in God's Word? How can we be a nation who claims, "In God we Trust," if we do not know enough about God to be under God's authority? Sisters and brothers if we don't know God, and if we

don't know what is in God's Word then we are off the map. For the golfers out there we have hooked the ball so far into the rough the ball is out on the interstate. (pause) Where's the green? (pause) Where's the course? (pause) Who knows? (pause) It's time to pull over and ask for directions. Let's face it, as a nation we are lost.

Here's the bitter truth. Those words on the government buildings are not about who we are as a country today. They are about what we as a nation wanted our country to be. (pause) A nation under God; a nation who puts our trust in God. I think everyone in this room wants to be part of a nation which reflects the truth of Jesus Christ as our Lord and Savior. Amen? **Amen!** I think we want someone to get out there and share the God we want with the lost and the hurting. Amen? **Amen!** Here's the hang up my sisters and brothers. We want someone else to do it. We want America to be great; and we want someone else to make it great. We don't want to be bothered.

What is the way forward for our country? Which direction should we go? Consider this for a moment. King David was by far the greatest king in Israel's history. King Solomon was the richest king in Israel's history. None of Israel's kings effectively led God's people to God. The lesson I take from that is real change – the kind of change it would take to truly make America great again cannot come from the top down. It just doesn't work that way. Every time a leader of Israel or of this country tried to make the country great from the top down it has failed. Basically, you can't get there from here by that road.

If America truly wants to be great; if the United Methodist Church wants to be strong the change we seek cannot come from the top. The change we seek must come from the bottom. John Wesley worried about Methodism. Wesley mused; "I am not afraid the people called Methodists should ever cease to exist either in Europe or America. But I am afraid lest they should only exist as a dead sect, having the form of religion without the power. And this undoubtedly will be the case unless they hold fast both the doctrine, spirit, and discipline with which they first set out."<sup>1</sup> Church, how have we held fast to the doctrine, spirit and discipline with which the people who built this building first set out? How have we held fast to the commitment of those who started this church all those years ago when they established the orphanage in this town? To do that work the local church had to be united in their devotion to Christ. This church was united in their drive to serve God by serving others. That is what makes a church a great church. Those are the same values that helped to make this country great. Those are the values I believe should be at the heart of making America Great Again.

It occurs to me before we can rightly claim to have a nation whose government trusts God we need to be a nation filled with people who are **Under God**. While all people are under God's authority too few in our country bend the knee to the Lord God Almighty. We are willing to accept Jesus Christ as our Savior, but to accept Jesus Christ as our Lord and King... (pause) that's something else. What would it look like if our country were a country filled with people who were eager to see the kingdom of God here on earth? We say those words every Sunday. "Thy kingdom come, thy will be done on the earth as it is in heaven." What if America rose up and worked to see the Kingdom of God here on earth? How great might America be if our country's goal was work hard to be self-sufficient; to work hard to serve God by serving those who cannot help themselves? How might America be different if those were the values that drive us to succeed? In Jesus' Name – Amen.

---

<sup>1</sup> Wesley, John, "Thoughts on Methodism," One Methodist VOL. 2 NO. 02 September 1999, [http://www.imarc.cc/one\\_meth/vol-02no-02.htm](http://www.imarc.cc/one_meth/vol-02no-02.htm) (Last viewed 7-19-18).