

**See Yourself as Sent
Matthew 9:35-10:5a**

**E. Stanley Ott
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You of the Orchard Lake Community Church are a wonderfully vibrant and vigorous congregation full of life and energy. It is a joy to be with you this morning. Paul, Jan, Katie and Beca have been friends of the heart many of us who are here this morning and we are so delighted they are here with you. A friend of the road is a friend you get to know because you walk life's road together. Perhaps you live in the same neighborhood or attend the same school or work for the same employer. While a friend of the road is a true friendship, it comes to an end when the road comes to an end and one of you moves away. A friendship of the heart on the other hand is a deep bonding between you and your friend and if you are here and your friend of the heart is in China your friendship remains as strong as ever! I know very well that in the years that many new friendships of the heart will grow with Paul and Jan and their family. Paul Thwaite is among the most gifted pastors in the whole church. He is a wonderful preacher and leader with a huge heart of compassion. I am delighted our Lord has led him here!

Now, I know as I speak as a guest among you, I am aware of how I often feel when guest preachers and speakers come to speak to our presbytery. They often don't know when to stop. Former president George Bush gave the commencement address at our son's college graduation. He told the story of a speaker who didn't know when to quit. He went on and on and on and on and on and on...and on! Finally, a person sitting behind the speaker on the podium took off his shoe and threw it at the speaker. It missed the speaker and hit a women sitting on the front row in the head. "Hit me again," she said, "I can still hear him!" I promise to be good. I will also keep my eye on the shoes of the choir.

We learn from our Scripture reading this morning that Jesus was going through various towns and villages on a missionary journey preaching the good news and healing people. Huge crowds gather around him setting up to one of the most famous lines in the Bible, *When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.* To be harassed means to be worn down, to be exhausted, and to be hassled. I bought a new laptop recently and when opening it in a normal way one of the hinges broke. The repair center said it would take them a month to fix it. That felt harassing. My wife, Ann Marie, was sitting on the sofa, her feet on the coffee table, reading a book. Her

husband (best to leave him nameless here), filled with affection gets up and sits on her leg, gently he thought, to give her a kiss and tears the meniscus in her knee. That's being harassed. As my friend Jack Stewart told me, "Stan, Ann Marie is suffering from a knee-*jerk* reaction!" To be harassed is to be hassled and worn down. To be helpless is to be thrown down, smashed down by some situation in life – you lose your job, you face a difficult illness, a relationship in your life is torn and painful. Jesus saw people then and he sees you and me today with his people eyes – he sees us the way we really are – worn down and thrown down and he feels compassion for us.

Now while Jesus is seeing the crowds and having compassion, where are the twelve apostle-disciples? The Scripture isn't clear about this but my guess is they are sitting in the front row, right in front of him. Although the Bible doesn't report this, my theory is that Jesus leans down to his twelve apostle-disciples and says, "Turn around!" So now they see the same crowd Jesus said, *37 "The harvest is plentiful [look at all the people!!!] but the laborers are few. 38 Therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers [namely you] into his harvest field."* To turn around is to get our eyes off ourselves and see the people around with the eyes of Jesus. So the first thing we learn from this text is that we are to receive people eyes. People eyes are the eyes of Jesus for people and sees people.

A young woman with tears streaming down her face walked out of our sanctuary during worship. An mature woman across the sanctuary arose and followed her and just stood and held her. People eyes. I saw a hotel guest offer a gentle witness about Jesus to a lady from Germany sitting in the lobby on her way to visit her mother's grave. People Eyes. I saw a person press an organization that gave minimal medical benefits to its employees to offer the same benefits to both management and labor. People eyes. It is humbling when we speak of people eyes to realize that most of us don't have people eyes. We tend to have buddy eyes which look at a crowd like this and only focus on the people we know. Or we have agenda-eyes only focusing on our activities, our computer, our Blackberry, our busyness and completely miss how harassed and helpless the people around us are feeling.

The wonderful preacher from Pittsburgh, Bruce Thielemann, tells seated in a restaurant. Bruce said, "At the table next to me were a mother and a father and a child, and the waitress came, and she was starch and stiff and obviously knew what she was about, and she asked the father what he wanted, and he ordered, and she asked the mother what she wanted, and she

ordered, and then she spoke to the little boy, and the mother said, “HE would like a child-sized order of chicken a la king.”

“Would you like a hamburger?” she said to the little boy.

“Yeah,” I’d like a hamburger very much.

“He would like a child-sized order of chicken a la king.”

“What would you like to have on your hamburger. Would you like to have a lot of ketchup on it—a little bit of mustard and onions?”

“No, I don’t want any onions. But I’d like the ketchup and...”

“Miss, evidently, you didn’t understand. He’d like a child-sized order of chicken a la king.”

“Do you want a Coke to go along with your hamburger and French fries, too?”

“Yeah, I’d like that.”

And with that, the waitress turned, and she walked away. And then it was that the little boy looked up at his mother and said, “Gee, mommy, she thinks I’m real.”¹

Wow! That waitress had people eyes. It feels so good to have someone actually pay genuine attention to you, to treat you as real. Let me tell you something. Jesus Christ thinks that you are real. With all of the stuff going on in your life, you may wonder, “Does anyone notice, does anyone care, will anyone help?” The answer is yes, because to Jesus Christ you are *very* real. Receive people eyes and see the people in your life the way Jesus sees them!

Now after Jesus gives his disciples people eyes we read in Matthew, *Then Jesus* summoned his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness.* 10:1 When he gave them authority to minister in his name he wanted them to believe that God would use them in the lives of other people. The Twelve apostles came to understand as they invited people to faith that they were not going in their own strength or, brilliance of speech but in the sheer power of God. When your people eyes see a person who is worn down or thrown down, believe that God will use you in that person’s life.

Joan Kuipers is a friend of mine who teaches nursing at Purdue University. On day she asked her small group pray for her father. She said, “My Dad is facing major surgery tomorrow. I’m concerned because insofar

¹ Rev. John Zingaro, Thielemann The preacher’s preacher (Cottage Grove, WI, 1999)p.300

as I know, he has never received Jesus Christ into his life.” Someone in her group said, “We know you’re going to phone your Dad tonight. Why don’t you simply ask him if he has ever received Christ?” So that night she phoned her dad. They began to talk about the surgery, about the prospects for recovery, some of the physical dimensions of the recovery. After quite a while, she said, “Dad I do have one question. Dad, have you ever received Jesus Christ into your life?” There as silence on the phone for a few moments and then her dad said, “No. I never have, but you know I’ve been planning on doing it tomorrow.” So she said, “Well, Dad, is there any reason that you should wait until tomorrow?” He said, “Well, no.” “Dad, would you like me to pray a prayer right on the phone and you could pray with me and ask Christ into your life?” “All right.” She experienced the joy of leading her father to faith. He not only survived the surgery. He was a changed man because his daughter believed God would use her in her father’s life.

Receive people eyes. Believe that God will use you in the lives of other people, and, finally perceive - see yourself as sent. We read in Matthew 10:5 - *These twelve Jesus sent out.* It isn’t enough to see with the people eyes of Jesus or believe that God would use us. We are to “sent” to follow through. Jesus said, *As the father sent me so send I you!* The verb “to send” occurs some sixty times in the Gospel of John. You and I are sent ones! Many of us love the benediction of Richard C. Halverson, former Chaplain of the U.S. Senate. I know Paul has used it here. “Wherever you go, God is sending you. Wherever you are God has a purpose in you being there. Christ who indwells you has something he wants to do through you where you are. Believe it and go in his grace and power.” When you have people eyes and when you believe God will use you then know you are sent!

A friend of mine, Chuck Rosemeyer, once told of a time he was working at a youth camp in upstate New York. Chuck said, “The kids would all come in by bus every seven days. The buses would pull up and the folks who were leaving would get back on and take off again. With a great burst of energy from being cooped up for so long the arriving kids would make a dash for the beach. We have a band and a welcoming committee and all the campers who are leaving are all lined up applauding and cheering, “This is going to be the greatest week of your life.” Finally, this bus from Baltimore showed up.

“The doors open and we’re screaming and the bands are playing and two guys get off, go to the luggage compartment, open it up, get out a

wheelchair, set it up and then two more guys get off carrying Sally and put her in the wheelchair and they take her to the para-sail beach. Now, a para-sail is a parachute hooked to a line, you know, about a two hundred yard long, hooked to a power boat. They strap you into a harness attached to the lined attached to the boat. When the boat driver yells “go”, you run as fast as you can run, and the boat pulls the line taut and the wind in the parachute will slowly lift you off the ground. They strapped Sally into the harness. Two guys held her up and ran as fast as they could. She popped up in the air, the boat pulled her awhile, then came back around and dropped her off in the water. A couple guys swam out in the water and carried her back in.

“We went up to those guys, ‘What’s goin’ on here? This girl is paralyzed. What do you think you are doing?’ ‘Sally’s been a part of our youth group for years,” they said, “She was in an auto accident and was paralyzed from the waist down. She has struggled with her own faith, struggled with whether there really is a God who loves her, whether she really fits with the rest of us. So we encouraged her to come to camp.’ And she said, ‘I don’t want to go to camp. All I’ll do is sit while you guys all have fun. I’m just going to be in the way.’ And so we made a commitment to Sally that she would do everything we do, bar none.’ So the next day we went down to the boat dock to water-ski. The water ski instructor strapped Sally to his back and got two slalom skis, and took her skiing. The next day she went tubing. We put a lifeguard in one inner tube and her in the other and took a ride and tried to knock her off. She went sailing. She went boating. You know, everything that her friends did, they did. Until we got to the fifth day.

“The fifth day at camp we climb Ampersand. Ampersand is one of the toughest mountains in New York. It is about a 3300 foot climb. The first 1000 feet rise covers about a three mile stretch in a steady, rising climb. The last 2000 feet are literally like this, straight up – over rocks, through gullies and streams and mud and it’s all you can do as a normal human being to make that climb. And so we went to the folks from Baltimore and said, “you guys have been just incredible. There isn’t anything like this we’ve ever seen before. Your commitment, your vision for what you want to have happen to her life, your willingness to change and adapt and make sure she’s been included is just incredible. But, you can’t make this climb with her. Our suggestion is that we take her part way up to where we break for lunch and then a bunch of us are going into town to do some shopping. It’s right near Lake Placid. It’s a quaint town and she’ll really enjoy that.

“They said, ‘No. We can’t do that. That’s not the commitment we made. Our commitment was 100 per cent. She is going to the top.’ They took a backpack, removed the pack from the frame and they lashed a straight-backed chair to it, put a seat belt on the chair and one by one those young men took turns carrying her on their backs to the top of the mountain. At they times had to carry Sally over streams of water, they lifted her up vertical drops, pressed through bushes and brambles and over all kinds of rocks and bumps. When they came through the clearing and sat her down on the top of Ampersand, hosanna, there wasn’t a dry eye in the camp because they had made a commitment, a commitment they knew would change a person’s life.”² Sally went to camp without hope. Because that team had people eyes, because they believed that God would use them in the life of another person, because they saw themselves as sent, God used them to change her life forever.

The truth is every one of us is a Sally. You and I have long been carried on the back of Jesus as we trust him by faith. He in turns sends you and me to receive his people eyes, believe that God will use you in the life of another person and to perceive - to see yourself as sent.

² Dr. Chuck Rosemeyer, “Just Do It!” (March 3, 1997 sermon preached at Pleasant Hills Community Presbyterian Church, Pittsburgh, PA)