

## God Says "Go"

You've probably heard this common expression before. Perhaps you've used it yourself on occasion. "That is easier said than done." "Easier said than done" shows us that there is a huge difference between knowing what should happen and actually doing what needs to happen. It reminds us that talk is cheap — taking action is tougher than simply talking action. We regularly run into situations that make us say, "Easier said than done." You're in a heated argument and someone tells you to calm down. Good advice, but easier said than done. People are talking about you behind your back, and a friend tells you, "You shouldn't care what others think of you." True enough, but it's easier said than done. "Forgive and forget." "Tell the truth." "Don't worry" "Just ask her out." All of these are way easier said than done. That's because things that are easier said than done are hard, difficult, challenging, impossible, or unnerving.

Today the Lord tells us to do something that makes us say, "That is easier said than done." Today the Lord tells us, "Go." Go and tell people about Jesus. It's not exactly a ground-breaking or earth-shattering command. It's not even a new command. God tells us many times to go, like when he says, "*Go and make disciples of all nations.*" "*Go into all the world and preach the good news.*" Go and tell people about Jesus. While that command is simple enough, when you think about what God is asking you to do, doesn't your heart start to race and your hands get sweaty and you get nervous? Because it's one thing to talk about telling people about Jesus; it's another to actually open your mouth and do it. It's one thing to sit here in the safety of church, it's a whole other thing to get out into your community or neighborhood and tell people about Jesus. Go — it's a simple command, but we often balk, we hesitate, we stop when God says, "Go."

And I think I know the reason why. We hesitate to go and tell because telling people about Jesus can be scary. And not just intimidating to think about, I mean sometimes you meet some legitimately scary people. I say this from experience. I once met a very large, angry man who kept a shotgun next to the door in case an unwanted visitor comes a-knocking. I met a little old lady who cussed me out with language that would make a sailor blush. I met a polite teenager who invited me in, only to hear his mom screaming that "that blankety blank guy from that blankety blank church" better not be in her house. I once knocked on someone's door and heard what sounded like either a large dog or a small bear trying to rip down the door so it could have me for dinner. Perhaps you think I'm exaggerating, making these up, or just trying to be funny — but I'm not. These are all real people I've actually encountered. These people are scary! And God wants us to go and tell them about Jesus? We're supposed to go and share the gospel with them?

Yes, yes you are. Because God simply says, "Go." That's it. No restrictions. No limits. No exceptions. Just "go." That's what God said to Ananias in our first lesson for today, taken from Acts 9: *The Lord told*

*[Ananias], "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight." "Lord," Ananias answered, "I have heard many reports about this man and all the harm he has done to your holy people in Jerusalem. And he has come here with authority from the chief priests to arrest all who call on your name." But the Lord said to Ananias, "Go! This man is my chosen instrument to proclaim my name to the Gentiles and their kings and to the people of Israel."*

So Ananias is supposed to go tell Saul about Jesus. Which sounds simple enough, but Saul was the last person Ananias wanted to see. Saul was a persecutor. He hated God, hated the church, and, if he walked into this church today, would hate all of you simply because you

believe in Jesus. This was the guy who, just one chapter earlier, was "destroying the church," going from house to house and dragging off men and women to put them in prison. This was public enemy number one for a Christian. And Ananias wasn't just going to see him or talk to him from a safe location — he was going to meet him, to help him, to heal him. He was going to put his hands on him and restore his sight, making it statistically more likely that Saul would see him and attack him or throw him in jail. Of course Ananias is nervous. Of course he is scared. Of course he doesn't want to go.

But what does God say to Ananias? "*Go.*" Go and tell Saul about Jesus, even though you're scared and nervous and really don't want to. Go and tell Saul about Jesus, because Jesus died on the cross even for the sins of Saul. Go and tell Saul about Jesus, because even though Saul hates God, God loves Saul. "Go." It's what God says to us, too. Go and tell people about Jesus, even when you're nervous or scared, even when they are scary. Go tell people about Jesus because Jesus died on the cross for the sins of the world — not just for the sins of us here today.

Go and tell people about Jesus because God wants everyone to come to a knowledge of the truth, to join him in heaven for eternity. Go tell people about Jesus, because that's what God wants. He wants you to share the message of Jesus. He wants you to play a role in bringing someone to faith. He wants you to help his kingdom grow. And he wants you to know that you are not going alone.

There's a reason I can talk somewhat lightheartedly about the scary people I've encountered while I was pounding the pavement for Jesus. It's because I know that it wasn't just me facing down the Angry Giant or the Foul Mouthed Grandma. It wasn't just me — I had the Lord of Hosts at my side. I had an army of angels behind me and the Lord Almighty speaking through me. I was a chosen instrument. That's what you are, too. A chosen instrument. A person handpicked by God to share Jesus with others. You are someone's connection to Jesus. You will be the one who shares a living Savior with those who are dead in sin. You will be the person who tells that unbelieving friend or relative about the Savior who loves them, who bled for them, who rose for them. You are God's chosen instrument. So go.

Go, and leave your worries at the door. God knows all the fears and concerns we have when it comes to sharing Jesus. He knows the excuses we make: "Sharing Jesus with someone might strain our relationship. I'm not confident enough. I don't know what to say. I'll just mess it up. I'm just too messed up." Ok...but look at the apostle Paul. You know, the same guy as Saul from our reading. The story of Ananias and Saul doesn't end with Ananias making excuses. He was scared, but he told Saul about Jesus anyway. And God planted faith in Saul's heart, and that faith changed Saul. He went from an unbeliever to a believer, from a persecutor to a pastor, from Saul to Paul — the man we know as the apostle Paul. And Paul shared many of the concerns, worries, and excuses that we have. Was he going to strain relationships by telling people about Jesus? Absolutely — he tried to convert the same people he once worked with to destroy the church. Was he always confident, or did he always know what to say? Not always. In fact, Paul describes his preaching like this, "*I came to you in weakness and fear, and with much trembling*" (1 Co 2:3) — hardly the words of a confident man. Was he too messed up to share Jesus? He was pretty far gone — he was an unbeliever who knew what the Bible said, who knew all about Jesus, yet he chose to turn his back on that and actively fight against God. He was pretty far gone. But was he too messed up for Jesus? Not even close. The persecutor Saul became the apostle Paul and traveled all over the known world, sharing the message of Jesus as he went. He told thousands upon thousands of people about Jesus. He started a dozen churches. He wrote almost half the books in the NT. He affected the kingdom of God in a huge, immeasurable way. It didn't happen all at once. It didn't happen overnight. It happened over a lifetime of telling others about Jesus. It happened because one man, a scared man named

Ananias, heard God's command to go, and he went. One chosen instrument shared Jesus with another chosen instrument, and the Word of the Lord spread like wildfire. Imagine what would happen if dozens or hundreds of people did the same.

You don't have to imagine, because it's already happening. It's been happening for hundreds of years in thousands of places. Like here, at \_\_\_ . Or in Watertown, where the school I represent, Luther Preparatory School, is located. At Luther Prep we have one task — to train and encourage high schoolers to hear God's command and go. In other words, LPS has been training the next generation of fulltime gospel proclaimers, pastors and teachers, for over 150 years. That is our task. And you can help us with this task. If you have children in grade school, consider sending them to Luther Preparatory School for four years of being immersed in God's Word, being surrounded by hundreds of like-minded believers their own age and being encouraged by dozens of pastors and teachers who bring an incredible amount of passion and zeal for the Lord's work. If you're a young student, keep Luther Prep in mind as you get closer to high school — your faith in Christ will grow, as will your desire to share the life-changing message of Jesus. But the best ways you can help us is to pray for Luther Prep. Pray for our faculty, that they continue to do their work well and faithfully. Pray for our students, that more of them would be willing and eager to share the message of Jesus.

Above all, pray that more and more people will hear God's command to go and obey it. Because that command to go is not just for students at Luther Prep. It's not just for your pastors and teachers here at Immanuel. It's for all of us. And one of the most unique blessings God has given us is this — there is someone in your life who needs to hear about Jesus. Maybe it's a friend or neighbor, a relative or coworker. Maybe this person needs to hear about Jesus for the first time or the fiftieth time. But there is someone in your life who needs, to hear about Jesus. You know that person. And you know what God says. God says, "Go." So let's go. Amen.