

Well let's start with the obvious this morning. We're in a series called *Dangerous Prayers*, and this week's prayer is "Send Me!" Apparently I took that prayer too seriously, because in August, as we announced last week, my family and I will be heading to Quincy where I will begin leading a small church plant called Restore Christian Church. Some of you might be thinking, "Oh, I get it! They planned these weeks (Search Me, Break Me, Send Me) to make this announcement. Clever!" Actually, we mapped out this sermon series clear back in February when none of us had any idea that circumstances would be what they are today. God clearly has a flair for bringing things about with a timing and precision that we could only dream of. He's in charge, which is what makes these prayers so dangerous.

Let's talk about dangerous things for a moment. There are degrees of danger, I think we'll all agree. There's a spectrum of dangerous things, right? I mean, there's the danger of doing something embarrassing, which is something to guard against, but it's not the end of the world if it happens. Then there's the danger of being misunderstood, which is never fun and can, in fact, be really frustrating, but you can recover from misunderstandings, hopefully. Then there's the danger of bodily harm, right? That's a risk some of us take every day, depending on our jobs, or, frankly, the length of our commutes- because every time you get up to highway speed in a car you're in danger of bodily harm. Bodily harm, is the kind of danger that means you could lose a finger, or maybe your hearing, or you might be walking around on crutches. Then there's life or death danger, right? That's about as intense as it gets. Everything hangs in the balance when you face this type of danger and you're out on the razor's edge.

So, really quickly, I want you to think about the *most* dangerous thing in your home. What's the *most* dangerous thing in your home right now? If you would, please turn to the person next to you and tell them what it is. (What did you share?)

Those are some dangerous things, certainly. But today I want to suggest that they're not the *most* dangerous thing in your home. The most dangerous thing in your home is this: Your Easy Chair. Your comfort (complacency, laziness, idleness, lethargy, sloth) that's the most dangerous thing in your home. The lazy boy. Here's why, comfort is the enemy of growth and you were made by God for more than that. Comfort (complacency) is the enemy of relationships, it's the enemy of generosity, it's the enemy of a vibrant life (life to the full is rarely about comfort). If I've learned anything in my own walk of faith it's this: God is not concerned with my comfort, He is concerned about growing me into the man He created me to be.

This is what we're afraid of, right? We're afraid that if we pray these dangerous prayers (search me, break me, send me) God is going answer them. If we pray, "search me, God," He's going to do it! He'll expose parts of our hearts and lives that we never wanted to see the light of day.

If we pray, "break me, God," He's going to do it! He's going to humble us, remake us, and drop us to our knees. The new life He promises only comes when we shed the old.

If we pray, "send me, God," He's going to do it! He will move us out of our comfort zone and into the thick of the action. He wants us to grow, and growth only happens through change and the only thing that you're going to change sitting in that easy chair is the channel.

Some of you are saying to yourselves right now, "See! This is why I don't pray dangerous prayers. God answers them!" And you're right. He does. And when He answers our dangerous prayers it is almost never for our comfort. When God sends us He calls us to step out of comfort and into His will for our lives. But here's the crazy part- every time we do this (step out of comfort and into His will- every time He sends us) there is joy.

That seems impossible to us, doesn't it? Comfort is where we find joy, right? The easy life; vacation; the beach; no cares; no worries- that's where we find joy, isn't it? We do, of course take pleasure in comfort, and I'm not suggesting one shouldn't take time off for family and fun and rest- the Sabbath principle was established by God for just such a reason- but JOY (capital J- Joy) runs so much deeper than pleasure or happiness, and while "taking it easy" can provide us with the latter, Joy is only found when we are growing into God's purposes for our lives.

If you don't believe me, let's look at Scripture to find out more. David learned this truth in his life and he wrote Psalm 40. Let's read it together.

Psalm 40

For the choir director: A psalm of David.

1

*I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.*

2

*He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.*

3

*He has given me a new song to sing,
a hymn of praise to our God.
Many will see what he has done and be amazed.
They will put their trust in the Lord.*

David wrote this Psalm, just as he wrote the others we have studied during this series. We've actually learned a lot about David this year. He was born into a large family of brothers and as the youngest son there was very little expected of him. He spent his youth tending sheep out in the fields. There was little about David that stood out, but, as we have learned, God does not look at the outward appearance of a person, He examines the heart. David's life was a series of ups and downs (chosen by God, defeated Goliath, chased by king Saul, lived on the run for years, crowned king, victorious in battle, an adulterer, a murderer.)

Through it all David was a man after God's own heart. Here in Psalm 40 we see a glimpse as to why.

In these verses we read as David explains God's pattern for preparing, equipping and sending out His people.

There are three steps to complete the pattern:

1. We Wait On God 2. He Positions Us For Action 3. We Declare His Goodness

Waiting on God-

David writes, "I waited patiently for the Lord to help me, and he turned to me and heard my cry."

Patience: "The capacity to accept or tolerate delay, trouble, or suffering without getting angry or upset." forbearance, self-restraint, perseverance, persistence, endurance, doggedness, determination, resolve

I've always been told that you should never pray for patience, because God will answer that prayer too. Praying for patience is a dangerous prayer. But the first step David draws our attention to in being sent by God, is his willingness to wait on God. Maybe he's got no choice in the matter. Maybe this is a season

of David's life that is out of his control. We don't know the exact reason for David's waiting, and I suppose that's good for us, in a way. It allows us to empathize with him, because we've been stuck in the mud at times too, right?

Some of us are very zealous to be used by God. We long for action and activity that is meaningful and changes hearts and lives, and it doesn't seem to be happening. Are we willing to wait for God's timing? Some of us are in need of help from God. We are in no position to be sent, instead we long for Him to step in and resolve what we're going through, and it can't happen soon enough. Are we willing to wait on God? Is it possible He is using this season of waiting to develop us, to prepare us, to equip us for the journey ahead?

David waits. In the mud and the mire. He waits. This is a skill that we can develop too.

1

*I waited patiently for the Lord to help me,
and he turned to me and heard my cry.*

2

*He lifted me out of the pit of despair,
out of the mud and the mire.
He set my feet on solid ground
and steadied me as I walked along.*

God Positions Us For Action-

I have a hard time with this part of God's role in my life. Do you? I want to be in charge. I want to make the decisions. I want to orchestrate my life according to my own plans and desires. There is very little that frustrates me more than feeling like I am not in control. When I think about praying, "God, send me." I have a very clear direction in mind, do you? And just to be clear, I think it's ok if you do. God wires us up with these hearts and minds and I think He loves to give us meaningful direction that is in keeping with who He made us to be, but make no mistake, He's the one in control.

He moves us. He relocates us. He plants us. He installs us. He situates us. He arranges us.

Some of us have learned this all too well. We had plans and we got redirected. We had a destination in mind but instead we've been taken on a detour.

I'm familiar with this. I was not looking to lead a church in Quincy, if you can believe that. I was quite content to stay right here at Harbor. I'm not one for having to see if the grass is greener on another hillside, I'm usually quite happy to stay where I am. Consequently, this season has been a challenge for me. I was asked to pray about stepping in and helping this church in Quincy, and I agreed to pray. That was it. Listen, if you're going to pray a dangerous prayer like "send me" please know that God just might. He might send you.

It has taken a lot of time for me to acclimate to the idea. I love being here. I've served here for over 8 years now, and I have not lost a bit of my heart for Harbor, her leaders, or the plans to multiply and help more people find their way back to God. I know God has great plans ahead for this church, but those plans don't include me in the same way they once did. God has made that clear to me. I prayed for this little church plant in Quincy and God began opening my heart, little by little, to the idea. What started as a half-hearted prayer, has turned into a clear calling in my life.

For David, God lifted him out of the muck, set his feet on solid ground, and then steadied him as he moved forward. What will God do for you when you ask Him? I can't say. But I know this, His plans are

better than my plans, just as His ways are higher than mine. I would rather pursue God's path for my life, than any other.

Now that leads to a very important question, how do I know that God is sending me? How can I discern where He wants me to go, or what He wants me to do?

David helps us answer these questions.

4

*Oh, the joys of those who trust the Lord,
who have no confidence in the proud
or in those who worship idols.*

5

*O Lord my God, you have performed many wonders for us.
Your plans for us are too numerous to list.
You have no equal.*

*If I tried to recite all your wonderful deeds,
I would never come to the end of them.*

6

*You take no delight in sacrifices or offerings.
Now that you have made me listen, I finally understand—
you don't require burnt offerings or sin offerings.*

7

*Then I said, "Look, I have come.
As is written about me in the Scriptures:*

8

*I take joy in doing your will, my God,
for your instructions are written on my heart."*

How was God good to David? How did God make his path clear?
God gave him a new song to sing (possibly the very Psalm itself).
He gave him joy (the capitol J kind, not based on his circumstances).
The wonders God revealed to him were too numerous to count.
God's word (His instructions) were a source of strength (they led to obedience)

After David's season of waiting, God moved in His life. He positioned David for action and He will do the same with us. What does it look like to be sent by God?

We Declare God's Goodness-

9

*I have told all your people about your justice.
I have not been afraid to speak out,
as you, O Lord, well know.*

10

*I have not kept the good news of your justice hidden in my heart;
I have talked about your faithfulness and saving power.
I have told everyone in the great assembly
of your unfailing love and faithfulness.*

We proclaim, we announce, we reveal, we express, we articulate, we broadcast the goodness of God for those around us.

a. Doing God's will (living out the Goodness of God)

I take joy in doing your will, my God,

for your instructions are written on my heart.” (Psalm 40:8)

b. Sharing God’s Goodness (in word and in action)

David told others about God’s justice, His faithfulness, His saving power, and His unfailing love.

“Send Me,” is a dangerous prayer. It means getting out of the comfortable chair and out into the action. I’m not sure what that is going to look like in your life. I have no idea where God wants to send you, but I do know this, when God sends us He goes with us. He has promised never to leave us or abandon us. I know that gives me confidence and I hope it does the same for you.

I’m going to give you a moment right now to ask God to send you. (paper strips on the seats) Maybe God is sending you to a person who you know needs encouragement right now. Maybe you have the ability to share the grace of Christ with them. Or maybe He’s sending you into service- calling you out of the easy chair and into the action. I don’t know how God has gifted you or how He’s equipped you, but I’m guessing you do. Maybe He’s sending you into ministry full time. Maybe He’s calling you to serve here at Harbor. It’s possible that God wants to send you into the water of baptism- an opportunity for you to declare the Jesus is the Savior and Lord of your life. (today at the lake...)

11

Lord, don’t hold back your tender mercies from me.

Let your unfailing love and faithfulness always protect me.

12

For troubles surround me—

too many to count!

My sins pile up so high

I can’t see my way out.

They outnumber the hairs on my head.

I have lost all courage.

13

Please, Lord, rescue me!

Come quickly, Lord, and help me.

We need to take the direction of our lives and place it at the foot of the cross. Jesus got uncomfortable for you!

4 *Don’t look out only for your own interests, but take an interest in others, too.*

5 *You must have the same attitude that Christ Jesus had.*

6 *Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to.*

7 *Instead, he gave up his divine privileges; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being. When he appeared in human form,*

8 *he humbled himself in obedience to God and died a criminal’s death on a cross.*

9 *Therefore, God elevated him to the place of highest honor and gave him the name above all other names,*

10 *that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, **11**and every tongue declare that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

16

But may all who search for you

be filled with joy and gladness in you.

May those who love your salvation

repeatedly shout, "The Lord is great!"