

So some of you may know that I have always enjoyed rock climbing. Now I'm not going to pretend that I'm an expert but it is something I enjoy doing. Well when rock climbing, it is important to have a belay. This is what a belay is. [Slide 2]. So a belay is the person who is ensuring that if at any point you fall whilst climbing, that you don't come crumbling down. The job of the belay is to do everything in his/her power to keep the climber safe and from as much injury or harm as possible. So I was just home for Christmas and I got to see my brother. The first one was taken a few days ago [Slide 3]. Well we were always getting into shenanigans together when we were younger. We often liked to do goofy things together as seen here [Slide 4]. Sometimes though, one of us (don't want to name names) would plan a shenanigan and be MUCH more enthusiastic than the other. When we were in middle school I had an idea of a shenanigan that my brother wasn't quite as enthusiastic, and to provide a visual of how we looked, I've provided this picture [Slide 5]. So after my first experience of rock climbing and experiencing a belay I really wanted to recreate it. So we had a tree outside of our house that I loved to climb. I climbed it all the time and the cool thing was that if I climbed it a certain way, I could get onto the roof of our house. I don't know what it is, but I've always loved climbing things. Well after climbing the tree the same way multiple times I decided I wanted to learn how to climb it a different way. So I decided to create my own belay system. So I climbed up the tree the way I always did with my apparatus. My harness was simply a belt that I put around my chest. I then took a carabiner from a Coppertone sport sunscreen bottle. Written across the carabiner read, "NOT FOR CLIMBING" but I didn't care. To be fair I was maybe 90 pounds soaking wet so I wasn't worried this was going to break. So I fasten everything together and I hand my brother the end of the rope and tell him to keep it taut so that if I fall or slip that he will keep me from plummeting to me death. So I'm excited for this adventure I'm about to embark on and he probably couldn't care less and was ready to be done. So I start climbing the tree and my brother is my belay. As I'm climbing I'm beginning to discover what a horrible idea this was. There was a reason I climbed the tree only one way multiple times. There was a reason I needed a belay to not die because about 3/4 of the way up, I have nothing to help me get higher and well my tiny little 12 year old arms couldn't hold on much longer. So I start descending slowly and disaster. There was a knot in the rope and because of the stress my weight had put on my pulley apparatus, the knot got stuck in the pulley and I'm hanging with my feet about 4 or 5 inches from the ground! The belt is digging into my armpits and I'm so close to touching earth with my feet. So I plead to my brother for help, asking him to help lift me so I can unclip this carabiner, which surprisingly is still doing its thing, and he can help me to the ground. Well my brother had other ideas. He saw this as a teaching opportunity I guess and said the words, "You got yourself into this, you can get yourself out of it." And he took off running, leaving me there for the wolves. Not really ha. So I'm sitting here, or hanging here rather, in this moment filled with absolute fear. Belt digging into my armpits, sweating profusely, genuinely frightened with no clue how I'm going to get out of this situation. So what I end up doing is swinging myself over to the tree, getting just enough of a grip to get leverage and unclip the carabiner as I fall to the ground in exhaustion. Relieved. This is sort of what we are talking about today. Jesus with the sent. When we are sent out by Jesus, He is with us and we have no reason to be afraid even though we might be. Jesus is

our true belay when we are climbing the tree. My brother was a horrible example of a belay who bails as soon as things get a bit hairy. But Jesus promises not to do this. Jesus is our spiritual belay when we embark on the adventure of evangelism. He promises to be with us. We will come back to this a bit later.

[Slide 6] As you know we have been in the sermon series, “God with us.” At the beginning of the month, Pastor Nate taught about the idea of “with.” About how we are meant to be with God and how this was fulfilled through the incarnation of Jesus Christ. God became like us to be with us. And the following week Pastor Derrick Parks reminded us about God being with the forgotten and how we should have heart for the forgotten. And last week Matthew taught us about God with the fearful. And last but certainly not least, I get the honor and privilege of closing out this series. Today we are talking about God With the Sent.

So for the students who have heard me teach, they know I like to provide a little background context of the passage from which I am teaching. So let’s briefly look at that for a few minutes. The first, which is obvious, but I like for us to be reminded, is that this comes to us from the book of Matthew, which is a first hand account of Jesus’ life on earth as all the gospels books are. But we are in Matthew because of the Great Commission, which is one of the best reminders that Jesus is with those whom He sends. The second thing we know is that this the end of the book of Matthew, and at the beginning of Chapter 28 we see that Jesus has resurrected from the dead. He has ultimately paid for our sins by His sacrifice on the cross. He has gone down to hell to pay for every account and He has now come back and this is His first encounter with the disciples afterwards. The third thing, which is minor, but interesting, is that there are only 11 disciples. So this means Judas Iscariot is no longer around and they had not yet found his replacement.

Now let’s look at the specifics of this passage. What is the author trying to say by writing these words? The first is this: **Some of the disciples doubted Jesus.** **[Slide 7]. “And when they saw Him they worshiped Him, but some doubted.”** This is an interesting thing to write in this passage but I think it’s extremely important. I think this is interesting because Matthew tells us the disciples worshiped but that they also doubted. I love that Matthew writes this because it reminds us that even the disciples are human. It reminds us that they were regular joes like us. And even though they had a firsthand experience with Jesus. They were with Him through it all. They still had trouble fully trusting even though he is standing right in front of them. **How often do we do this? In my life it feels like I’m constantly swinging back and forth between this mindset of fully trusting and worshiping God and this mindset of doubt and fear.** And I think it’s important that this is in here because it reminds us that even those who walked closely with Him

still struggled at times. It reminds us that we can still be followers of Christ despite the doubt because He is bigger than our doubt and fear.

The second thing we see is Jesus' response: **He commands the disciples to make disciples in His name.** [Slide 8]. **19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you."**

I love Jesus' response here. While Jesus was a man who cared deeply for hurting people and we know Him as loving, He never hesitated to point people back to the most important things in the current moment. The first thing He does is remind them that He is who He is. He reminds them that ALL authority has been given to Him. He shatters any source of doubt they have with this. But after He reminds them of who He is, He reminds them what they are to do next. He reminds the disciples that there is work to be done. Jesus isn't sitting around and telling them, "well since you're doubting, maybe you should take it easy for a bit." NO! He tells them to get to work. He tells them to go out and do the greatest thing they could do with their time: Making disciples in His name. **What does that look like for us?** This is the age old question isn't it? And one I ask myself constantly. One that I think we should all ask often. **"Jesus, what does it look like for me to effectively make disciples in your name?"** For me it's working in student ministry full time. For my younger brother, it's moving to England to take a gap year and work as a missionary. For others, it's being faithful as a small group leader, or Sunday school teacher, or a deacon, or serving with children. Discipleship begins before the person becomes a Christian. I believe we should keep this in mind whenever we come into contact with people. I believe God calls us to make ourselves available and ready to point others to Christ at any given moment.

The third thing we see in this passage is that: **Jesus reminds the disciples that he will not send them out to do something and just leave them hanging out to dry.** [Slide 9]. **"And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."**

I think this is also in response to the fact that they had doubt and fear. Fear is the number one reason I don't do something. Remember the fear I was experiencing as my brother left me? Remember how poor of a belay my brother was? Jesus promises the disciples that He will be their belay. He will be there to help them in their weaknesses. They do not need to be afraid because He triumphs over fear. He just did it right? He just defeated death, fear, sin, all the crap in the world by becoming these things for us. If anyone has any reason to remind us not to fear, it's Jesus.

Think of a time when you had an opportunity to have a spiritual conversation with someone and you didn't. What is your source of fear that hinders your ability to know that Jesus is with you?

For me, it's this idea of not being effective. I tend to not want to screw people up, I feel like I need to "have my ducks in a row" before I can effectively disciple someone. This is pride though, this idea that I need to have my act together before I can do anything is assuming God isn't enough. We need to have a belay that won't leave us with a belt digging into our armpits as we swing around seeking help. But Elijah, What does that look like? Excellent question. Let's look at some of the practical application we can take from this passage for our lives.

The first thing we can take away from this passage is that **[Slide 10] Follow Christ Despite Doubt** . Now you may be wondering how this is applicable to our lives. I think it's because we get these ideas in our heads that once we become a Christian that we will no longer have any doubts. This simply is not the case. Why you may ask? Because we are still human and we still sin. We still do things for the sake of our glory and not God's glory. We will still doubt because we still sin. We will still doubt that He knows what He's doing. Now, you may be thinking what a bum deal this is but I disagree. To me, knowing that I will doubt just proves my humanness and further proves my need for Him to be present within me. The doubt is what pushes me to dig deeper and search further than I would have had I not doubted. Being on this end of doubt is truly a blessing. So rather than praying to God, "remove this doubt from me." We should pray, "God what is it I'm doubting? Why am I not fully trusting You? God, help me understand this doubt so I can know You more." And we see other examples of this in scripture. In **Mark 9:24 [Slide 11] Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!"** . In this story a man comes to Jesus seeking His help and says, "if you can, help my son." To which Jesus proceeds to call out this man's doubt. And I love that the man doesn't get defensive right? He doesn't say, "well you would doubt too if you were in this situation. I'm dealing with a lot right now." No, he owns it. He says, "Lord I believe but help me in my unbelief." He is basically saying, "Jesus I want to trust you, and I need your help to fix where I miss the mark on that." Imagine what our lives would look like if we just fully trusted in Jesus instead of worrying about our doubt.

The second thing we can take away from this passage is **[Slide 12] Make Christlike Disciples** . This one seems pretty obvious right? I mean Jesus literally says to make disciples in His name. But how often do we forget to do this? How often do we focus on our own selfish agenda? Let me ask you this. **When people look at you and what defines your life, is it Jesus? If not, what is it?** Look this isn't an easy question to ask ourselves but I believe it is imperative that we do so. This is because it forces us to not only look inward at our motivations, but to turn towards Christ once we realize how selfish we are. Another way of saying this is we need to see the value and worth of Jesus in order to make disciples in His name. You know an argument I hear from people is, "well I don't want to offend others. I don't want to say something that makes them uncomfortable, is the gospel not powerful enough to change lives? Surely I don't need to talk to people about Jesus." Look I get it, sometimes I feel this way too. In fact, the disciples felt this way at one point and Jesus quickly shut that down. Let's take a look at **[Slides 13,14,15] Acts 1:6-8 So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" 7 He said to them, "It is not for you to know the times or seasons that the Father has fixed by His own authority. 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my**

witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

. so what we see here is the disciples are thinking, "welp the big event has happened. Jesus paid for our sins. He defeated death. I guess we just get to kick back while His power does the work." They ask Jesus when He's going to finish everything here on earth. And Jesus' response is perfect. He says, "It's not your decision how this gets done, oh by the way you're going to do it." Can you imagine this? It's kind of like a baby learning how to walk right? The baby thinks, "man this life is good. I cry and I get what I want. I get carried everywhere. Couldn't get better." But all of a sudden, PLOP! You've been placed down and now you are expected to try, and fail, over and over again until you get it right. Why? Because you need to be able to walk because that's what you were designed to do. So as a follower we are designed to make Him known to others.

The third application point is: **[Slide 16] No Fear With Jesus.** You see the walking illustration wasn't perfect because it assumes we do it without any help. But when sharing Jesus we do need help. And not only do we need help but He also promises to help us. Remember, Jesus is not the belay who bails on us. We do not need to be afraid because He promises not to leave us. Let's look at a couple of other passages that remind us of this. **[Slides 17,18,19] John 14:16-19**

16 And I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. You know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. 18 I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live.

. See the good thing is that Jesus is not my brother! He doesn't leave us hanging out to dry with a belt digging into our armpits as we flail about helplessly. He leaves us with a helper to rely on for when we are not strong enough. This is the Holy Spirit. I, far too often, forget about the Holy Spirit. I think about God the father and I think about Jesus. But I forget about the Holy Spirit, Who is the helper I've been given. The Holy Spirit is what tells me right from wrong. **[Slide 20]** I've been reading the Chronicles of Narnia series. So as I was preparing for this sermon I actually read The Magician's Nephew. And if you haven't read these books I highly encourage it. There are some deep theological truths within the words of these "children's" stories. As I was reading through The Magician's Nephew we have this incredible scene. Digory, whom is a character that has traveled to Narnia, is speaking with Aslan the lion. And Digory, much like these disciples who doubted, is speaking with Aslan about the wrongs he has done. Digory is this character who wants to do right but still doubts and makes mistakes. Kind of like us. So Aslan, provides an opportunity for Digory and says this.

"Son of Adam, are you ready to undo the wrong that you have done to my sweet country of Narnia on the very day of its birth?"

Digory responds, **"Well I don't see what I can do, you see the queen ran away and..."**

Aslan, cutting him off, **"I asked, are you ready?"**

Digory, "Yes."

I love this scene because Aslan is much like God in this situation. He knows we've messed up and He doesn't want us to wallow. He wants us to move forward and keep doing good for His kingdom. So we see Aslan then tell Digory what he wants him to do. Digory sees that it is a tall task. Difficult for him, as a small boy, to do efficiently. This is a perfect scene of Digory focusing on his weaknesses and how they will hold him back in this situation. Digory says,

"I hope, Aslan, You're not in a hurry. I shan't be able to get there and back very quickly."

Aslan: "Little son of Adam, you shall have help."

Man what a powerful scene right? Jesus does the same thing to us. He reminds us we will have help because His power is made perfect in our weakness. Now I know some of you also fear that you might not know the right words to say. I worry about this too. Trust me, I fear this every time I teach students and I most certainly feared this while prepping this sermon. And we aren't the first ones who fear this, the disciples feared this as well. Let's look at an example of this **[Slides 21,22]** **Matthew**

10:19-20 19 When they deliver you over, do not be anxious how you are to speak or what you are to say, for what you are to say will be given to you in that hour. 20 For it is not you who speak, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

. This is when Jesus is commissioning the disciples. He is instructing them on how they should go out and make disciples. So he reminds them that they shouldn't fear that they say the wrong thing. My pastor at the church in Austin where I used to work would often pray, "Lord take the words and after they leave my mouth fix them before they reach their ears." What a great prayer right? This is a pastor who prepared very well for his sermons but still understood that it's God who makes the words powerful. When I was working at this church in Austin the first time I spoke to students was the first time I'd taught students on a stage in a church setting in 4 years. I was so nervous. I showed up that morning and 120 high schoolers were there. I had to give a gospel centered message to 120 high schoolers when I hadn't spoken in setting like this for 4 years. My chest was tight, my knees were shaking, I felt like my voice was quivering, I said "essentially" WAY too many times, I messed up on certain scripture reference. I thought it was horrible and I thought no one got anything from it. I was overwhelmed by the number of students that approached me afterwards saying they learned so much. They brought up specific things that I completely forgot I had said. That's when I realized just how much the Spirit helps us in our message. There is no room for fear when we are sent by Christ.

As I always do with our students when I teach, I leave you with a challenge moving forward. My challenge is that you look internally to find what it is that is causing you fear. What is in the way of trusting Jesus to be your bely? Maybe you need to sit down and have some tough conversations with people. Maybe you need to ask some questions about things you are blind to. My hope for you is this, that you leave here today knowing we are not called to fear. I hope you all leave here today knowing that Jesus is with us, as those who are sent by Him.