**Crossing the Street Series   
Sermon 1: Sent Like the Son [Scott Pilgrim]**

John 20:1-23, Mark 1:9-15

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**Audio version of this sermon:** https://missioning.buzzsprout.com/1029217/10307937-sermon-sent-like-the-son-scott-pilgrim-may-mission-month-2022

Hi, I'm Scott Pilgrim, the Executive Director of Baptist Mission Australia, and it's great to share in the Crossing the Street series with you. I was sitting with my older kids recently, and they were talking about travel plans. As countries open up and as flights begin around the world, their beginning to dream of travel again. And I'm sure many of you are doing the same thing.

As they were chatting, I was thinking about Mel. A young Aussie woman, a police officer from New South Wales, who's recently taken the trip of a lifetime. She's headed to a country where few travel. This is not a tourist destination! Why has she gone? She's gone to the Silk Road Area - across the world into a small community, into a country where few tourists would even think of traveling.

She's gone because she's been sent by the Son.

Mel is a beautiful young woman who is passionate about life. She knows she's loved by God. She loves God and she's responded to God's gracious invitation and calling in her life. She's obediently and sacrificially stepped out to respond to that call. She's crossed the world. Because she's been sent by the sun.

Very few of us will do what Mel has done and cross the world to a different country. But in this series, we want to remind ourselves that every one of us are called to *cross the street*. We're invited to open our eyes afresh and consider what mission is. To remind ourselves that I'm not responsible for mission, that your pastor for missions isn't, or your senior pastor, or your church. But we remind ourselves that God is already at work in our worlds.

God is already at work in the Silk Road where Mel has gone to, God is at work in your community, your town, your street, and my challenge - the invitation to me and to you – is to open our eyes afresh, to hear again, God's gracious invitation to mission, and like Mel, to step out in faith, across the street, or across the world, sent like the Son.

In John chapter 20, in this beautiful passage, we see Jesus, the risen Christ, among His disciples, among His friends, His extended family who journeyed with Him on mission, Jesus has gone to the cross. And the disciples have seen the Messiah King nailed to the cross and crucified. And for them, their dreams are shattered, the picture of the kingdom they had is gone.

And then suddenly, they have to grapple and get their head around the empty tomb. And what does the resurrection mean? And who is Jesus? And there is the Son of God in their midst. And what is Jesus challenge and gracious invitation in John 20? “My peace I give you, just as the Father sent me, so I am sending you.” And then He breathed on them, and said, “Receive the Holy Spirit, just as the Father sent me. So I send you.”

That's who we are as a mission people as Australian Baptists around this nation, and intercultural workers around the world that you partner with, we’re sent people. We’re sent like the sun, we’re sent across the street, we’re sent to break down barriers, we’re sent to build bridges, we’re sent to forge relationships, we’re sent as ordinary people with the mission of God in our hands. Can I encourage you to remind yourself again of that privilege today, that God would choose someone ordinary like me, to cross the street, to have His hands and feet?

We are sent people, sent to embody the hope of Jesus by word and deed, sent to model the incarnation of Jesus. In John chapter one, we have that marvellous image, that God, the God of the universe breaks into human history. He moves into the human neighbourhood.

What are our intercultural workers doing around the world? Humble, passionate, ordinary men and women, singles, families, older people, younger, different cultural backgrounds… What are they doing? They're modelling the incarnation. They're living in neighbourhoods. They're living alongside people. They're crossing streets every day. They're doing ordinary and extraordinary things, the living out the incarnation. And that, again, is the invitation afresh to you and I, in local churches across our movement, day by day, as sent people, to embody the good news of Jesus and cross the street, sent like the Son.

So what does it mean to be sent like the Son, what does it mean for Mel? What does it mean for you and I today to consider afresh that we are sent like Jesus?

Can I invite you to come back to a template passage very quickly with me today - Mark 1:9-15. In Mark chapter one, we get the baptism of Jesus. If you like, here is the coronation of the King. Now, it's not your typical royal coronation that we picture of Kings and Queens and Princes today, elaborate and costly things, exuberant.

No, here humbly, Jesus is baptised by the eccentric Prophet, who had a strange dress sense. Here is Jesus humbly being baptised.

But what happens at His baptism? We see the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit together. We capture a picture of the Trinity community, the reminder that mission is about community.

We're not called to mission alone, but we're called to mission in community. That Mel doesn't go to the Silk Road alone, but she joins a team. She's part of a team of teams, supported by people across this country who have invested in the vision of Baptist Mission Australia. We are a mission community and mission people.

And what happens at Jesus baptism? We hear the declaration of the Father, “Son, I love you, you are my beloved Son.” The beautiful words of a Father declaring love for the Son. And then we read the Holy Spirit descends upon Jesus. Jesus is equipped by the Spirit, empowered by the Spirit, ready to step out into mission. A declaration of love, “You are my son.” Jesus identity, “I've come to do the will of the Father, loved by the Father, full of the Spirit.” What happens? Jesus steps out into mission.

And the first thing we read, He steps out into battle. There's no coincidence there, we live in a beautiful and broken world. But every day as followers of Jesus were called into neighbourhoods, into communities around the world, where we face struggle and toil and battles, but also the joy of serving Jesus. And we see Jesus stepped out into the wilderness into temptation. And we see Jesus stepped through that battle. Why? Because he’s secure in his identity. He knows that He's loved by the Father. And he knows that he's empowered by the Spirit for the mission that God has called Him to.

I think it's so important today that we go back to that Mark one template. I want to remind myself of that regularly. I want to remind our teams of that, because it gives me a model of what does it look like to be sent by the sun? In a world that calls me in so many different directions? In a world where, at times, it's hard to listen to God, where there are so many competing voices, your worlds like mine, are full of information. I live with information overload every day.

There are so many choices when it comes to entertainment and leisure. And there is the call of the world to pursue consumerism and materialism. There's the call of the world to pursue power and success. The call of the world to ascend the ladder in terms of career and wealth. There's social media, how many likes I might have or what someone said about me on Instagram.

We live in a world that seduces us to embrace the culture of the day. And yet in that culture, we hear the countercultural voice of Jesus, calling us to follow Him. It's the countercultural model that Mel’s embraced, to sacrificially put aside the call of the world to pursue her call to follow Jesus to cross the street and to cross the world.

Today, I wonder, what are the voices that bombard you?

It may be some that I have already mentioned. It may be how people label you. It may be how you even label yourself. It may be that some of you have been listening today, thinking what have I got to offer? And the reality today, we hear afresh, what does it look like to be sent by the Son?

We remind ourselves that we are loved by the Father. The apostle John says, “God buckets His love upon us.” I just love that.

Sometimes when it's hot at home, I see my kids are running around with buckets full of water, and they're throwing water at each other and they're screaming with joy and laughter. Picture that, a God who buckets love on you every day. A God who loves you as you are and as you can become, and a God who loves you so much that He esteems us with the privilege of serving Him. Ordinary people with the mission of God in our hands.

It may be in this Crossing the Street series that you'll catch your breath. You'll take your time to be reminded again that God wants to use you, in your neighbourhood, in your community. Or it may be that God has an intercultural call upon your life, and it might be taking the next steps, to be curious and pursue… What does that mean?

Today, who is Scott Pilgrim? I’m a father, I'm a husband, I'm a pastor, I'm a team leader at Baptist Mission Australia, under twelves basketball coach of the mighty Mustangs. But most of all, who am I? I'm a citizen of the King, I'm a child of God, I am loved by the Father.

But more than that, as I'm sent by the Son, I'm empowered by the Spirit. I'm not bereft. God knows I can't do it on my own. God knows that certainly Scott Pilgrim can't do it on his own. I need the Holy Spirit at work in my life, the Holy Spirit to develop the fruit of the Spirit, to cultivate Christlikeness in me, the Holy Spirit at work in my community that I open my eyes and see people of peace who I can come alongside with the hope of Jesus. The Holy Spirit, who is my comfort and my advocate, my God. The Holy Spirit, He calls me to courage and innovation.

For more than 140 years Baptist Mission Australia has crossed streets around the world. We've built bridges, we're broken down barriers, we've gone to new places, we've done cutting edge mission, why? Not because of who we are. But because the Spirit has led us to those places. The Spirit has opened doors. The Holy Spirit is at work in Mel's life, and has taken her to the Silk Road to work amongst a group of people where there are so few followers of Jesus. So few people who know Jesus in a way that makes sense them, who know that intimate love of God, where there are very few vibrant faith communities following Jesus in their distinctive ways.

Knowing she is loved by God, knowing the Spirit’s with her, Mel has stepped out to cross the world. The same invitation to you and I to cross the street today, loved by God. We are spirit people. The Holy Spirit and mission are integral - they go together, hand in hand.

Our theme for 2022 at Baptist Mission Australia is Come Holy Spirit. Why are we praying that prayer? Because we realize that we need the Spirit to lead us in mission. “It is not by might, It's not by power, but by my Spirit.” Says the Lord.

In South East Asia, there is a wonderful couple, Dave and Caz. Some of you listening today may have had the privilege of meeting them over their journey in South East Asia.

As a couple they so capture what it means to be sent by the Son. They embraced God's grace invitation to mission well before they went to South East Asia, they'd crossed the street in their neighbourhoods, they met and got married. And there they are working in South East Asia. And there's Dave.

Whenever I sit and talk with Dave, it doesn't take long for the conversation to come around to Jesus and God's love for him. It doesn't take long for him to humbly remind himself, remind me, remind others of the privilege that he has to be where he is today, making a significant difference for God in a country where it's hard to proclaim the good news. In a country where so few know Jesus in ways that makes sense to them. But there is Dave, humble, secure, because he knows his identity in God. He knows that he's loved by the Father and so often as I chat to him. He kind of tears up, so naturally and authentically, about that love.

He challenges me. His authenticity challenges me, because I'm reminded… do I grab hold that every day? Do I take hold of that every day? That I'm loved by the Father, that God buckets his love upon me? And because of that, I can be secure to step out and to live a countercultural life like Dave?

And then Caz, his wife, on the ground with Dave for two decades. Resilience, perseverance, the highs and the lows of ministry and what keeps her going? That reminder that she's not alone, that she's loved by God, and the Holy Spirit's with her every day. A discerning woman who sees doors open and doors closed in that country, who recognises that God is at work in her world. And her challenge? To keep her eyes open, sent by the Son.

The beautiful story of Caz with her eyes open, seeing a woman named Alice. And there's something that kind of moves inside her, the Spirit at work, discerning that relationship. There is Caz, an ordinary person, the mission of God in her hands living, in that local neighbourhood. And there's Alice and they form a relationship. They come from different religious backgrounds, cultural backgrounds, ethnic backgrounds, their view of the world is very different. Their upbringing is so different, but Caz so naturally breaks down barriers, builds bridges, forges relationship, embodies the hope of Jesus by word and deed. And with God to do the rest, a relationship is established.

And Alice is offered the first employment opportunity in a new English training school, that, fast forward, is blossoming and growing across South East Asia only because Australian Baptists partner with Dave and Caz, and we thank you for your great support. Please continue to cheer on their great work across South East Asia.

And here’s Alice. She gets that job, and she grows professionally and personally. The relationship continues to develop with Caz, she becomes a follower of Jesus. She experiences that new life for herself. She recognizes that God is bucketing His Love on Her, her whole life has changed. Suddenly she discovers grace and freedom in that culture. She knows her identity is a child of God, and Caz and Dave and others help her to understand what it means to discern the Holy Spirit. She's out there finding people of peace, she becomes a disciple maker. She becomes a leader of a faith community. It's such a wonderful story.

Dave and Caz, sent by the Son, and now Alice crossing streets, sent by the Son.

The finish of that beautiful story, our intercultural workers and other people of different kinds of professions who come to South East Asia, and who want to learn the culture and language, and how to share the good news effectively, they want Alice to teach them. They want to sit with Alice because Alice knows the culture, because Alice knows her people, because Alice knows what it means to share the good news of Jesus by word and deed in ways that make sense to her community, in her language, in her way.

But it started with Dave and Caz, a 20 year journey.

People who are resilient, people who've persevered, people who have faced tough days, hard days, but also glorious days, just like we face. But people who know what it is to be secure in their identity in that culture, to live counter culturally, because they are loved by the Father and empowered by the Spirit. That template is there for you and I today. It's what has taken Mel to the other side of the world.

As we finished today, it's what's taken Pete to his neighbour Mark, in suburban Melbourne. Let me finish with the story because I love how it brings the Crossing the Street theme right back to your backyard.

There is Pete, an ordinary Aussie who goes to a local Baptist Church. He’s in his 50s, living alone. He's done evangelism before, and doesn't really like that word. He kind of felt he's failed in sharing his faith. And it's kind of become almost a weight on his neck… mission, evangelism. He goes to a training course run by Baptists Mission Australia and he learns more about what we would call contextualised mission. What does it mean to live in your neighbourhood, in your place, and share the hope of Jesus in ways that makes sense to people?

It's true for Mel, it’s true to Dave and Caz, it’s true for you and I and for Peter.

So Peter goes away from that training with a sense of new hope and energy. And during the pandemic, in the first lockdown, a neighbour moves in next door. Normally, Pete would have kind of closed his eyes and not thought about that neighbour. But a neighbour moves in next door, and Pete sees a younger Vietnamese man with broken English moving into the unit next door.

And there's a sense for Pete of God at work.

You know, Pete says to me, later on, “It wasn't rocket science. There was Mark, and there was a man who seemed to have needs and here was I saying, ‘God, use me with my hands and feet to embody Christ.’” What does Pete do? Pete simply begins a conversation across the fence. He begins to break down barriers. He seeks to build bridges, forge relationships, and, across the fence, they begin to chat.

There's some communication challenges. Beyond that there's ethnicity challenges, there's cultural challenges, there’s religious challenges that Pete finds out. Mark's Vietnamese and he comes from a Buddhist background. And as the lockdown continues, for the first time in his life Pete reads about Vietnam and its history, he reads up on Buddhism, he starts to cook some Vietnamese dishes. It's a wonderful story about living with the hope of Jesus in your local neighbourhood. And the two men move beyond that conversation relationship.

Pete begins to mow Mark's grass, and finally out of lockdown, they get to come together to share a meal. Pete asks Mark what his favourite Vietnamese dish is, and Pete cooks it. First time ever, and Mark and Pete sit opposite each other. And Mark gives Pete a nine out of 10 for that Vietnamese dish!

When Pete told me that story, I'll be honest, there were tears in my eyes. Because that story captures mission, the heartbeat of God, an ordinary man with the hope of Jesus in his hands, knowing that He's loved by the father, knowing that the Spirit is with him, and day by day building a relationship. And what's happening now, a couple of years on? Mark is still on a journey towards Jesus. Pete and Mark meet, in Mark's lounge room with two men from a local Vietnamese church who speak the language. And together the four of them are opening up the scriptures, reading about Jesus. And Mark is moving closer and closer to understanding what it means to follow Jesus in a way that makes sense to him.

Friends, the gracious invitation of mission afresh to each one of us - to cross the street, to recognize that we are loved by the Father and that the Holy Spirit is with us today. And to take the weight off ourselves and to step out in faith and obedience. To open our doors with hospitality and generosity, to look around our community with fresh eyes. To see that we are a mission people called to partner together, to cross the street in local communities and to cross the street around the world. Sent like the Son, “Just as the Father has sent me, so I send you.”

We pray for your mission in your local community today. We invite you to pray for us at Baptist Mission Australia and our intercultural workers around the world. And like Pete, let's step out and embody the good news by word and deed. God bless you.