

“A Better Story: The Good News and Us”
Matthew 28:16-20

“If a tree falls in the woods and no one is there to hear it, does it make a sound?” While this philosophical riddle might make us feel central to the universe, it actually reflects a deep truth about our human design: **we are made for community**. If no one is there to hear us, we feel isolated—even cut off.

Whether we are launching a neighborhood project or a spiritual mission, success depends on our ability to connect. We cannot do it alone. Two examples come to mind:

- **The Community Garden:** For years, I tried to garden in my backyard. I failed miserably thanks to persistent squirrels and poor soil. But last year, I joined the **Batavia Community Garden**. Sharing resources, expertise, and **watering shifts** transformed a monumental task into a joyful success. Last week, seeing the garden open for the season, my heart was full.
- **The Traveling Bookstore:** Rita, a retiree in a tiny town, dreamed of opening a bookstore. Since a brick-and-mortar shop wasn't feasible in her small community, she put her passion on wheels. Now, she travels the country, sharing the joy of books with people she never would have met otherwise.
<https://youtu.be/z2dzuAd5AC8>.

This is how God designed our world. We are wired for connection; our well-being is intimately linked to the well-being of others. After the resurrection, Jesus met his disciples on a mountain in Galilee to give them their final instructions.

Let's listen to **Matthew 28:16-20** (<https://youtu.be/GOASlpQcZ6s?t=178>)

“All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. 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, and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

The followers of Jesus were not meant to hoard their experiences. They were invited to put what they had learned into **circulation**, keeping the flow of love moving through their daily encounters.

Jesus' vision was the transformation of the world through unconditional love. This "Great Commission" wasn't about converting people to a formal religion called "Christianity"—that didn't exist yet. The disciples still saw themselves as Jewish. Instead, they were being called to a new way of thinking and living: **the Way of the Kingdom**.

This meant making "disciples of love" who feed the hungry, heal the sick, and welcome the stranger. It offered a "better story" for the world—an alternative to the violence and oppression of earthly empires.

There is a vital nuance in the original Greek of this passage. A more accurate translation of “**Go**” in verse 19 is “**As you go**” or “**Wherever you go.**” As author Bruce Reyes-Chow suggests, this invites us into a "relational posture." We aren't called to be salesmen or conquerors; we are called to be companions. There is a famous saying that sharing the Good News is simply “**one beggar telling another where to find bread.**”

Sometimes we are the ones who need to hear the news. Other times, we are the ones sharing it. In his book *Everything Good about God Is True*, Reyes-Chow writes: "We can share the good news in a way that is not oppressive or patronizing... It invites people into a conversation, listens without judgment, and measures maturity by the depth of engagement, not by agreement with a creed."

Our world is flooded with self-help gurus, influencers, and mega-church broadcasts. We don't need another "sales pitch" for Jesus. What the world lacks is the **personal touch**. More than ever, we are longing for belonging and connection. You might think that because books are available online, we don't need traveling bookstores. But we do. We need the human connection. Similarly, the most powerful experiences of faith happen when someone who knows and loves us invests in us personally. **Your voice and your story are exactly what the people in your life need to hear and know.**

Take a moment now to picture one person who shared the love of God with you. Consider how that personal connection made all the difference. Give thanks to God for their impact on your life.

Closing Prayer by Marian Wright Edelman:

Lord, I cannot preach like Martin Luther King, Jr.
or turn a poetic phrase like Maya Angelou
but I care and am willing to serve.

I do not have Fred Shuttlesworth's and
Harriet Tubman's courage
or Eleanor and Franklin Roosevelt's political skills
but I care and am willing to serve.

I cannot sing like Fannie Lou Hamer
or organize like Ella Baker and Bayard Rustin
but I care and am willing to serve.

I am not holy like Archbishop Tutu,
forgiving like Mandela, or disciplined like Gandhi
but I care and am willing to serve.

I am not brilliant like Dr. Du Bois or
Elizabeth Cady Stanton,

or as eloquent as Sojourner Truth and
Booker T. Washington
but I care and am willing to serve.

I have not Mother Teresa's saintliness,
Dorothy Day's love or
Cesar Chavez's gentle tough spirit
but I care and am willing to serve.

God, it is not as easy as the 60s
to frame an issue and forge a solution
but I care and am willing to serve.

My mind and body are not so swift as in youth
and my energy comes in spurts
but I care and am willing to serve.

I'm so young
nobody will listen
I'm not sure what to say or do
but I care and am willing to serve.

I can't see or hear well
speak good English, stutter sometimes
and get real scared standing up before others
but I care and am willing to serve.

Use me as Thou will to save Thy children today and tomorrow
and to build a nation and world where no
child is left behind and everyone feels welcome. Amen.