

# Taking His Place

by Warren Wiersbe

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*As Christians, we have the responsibility to take Jesus' place, share His power, and fulfill His purpose.*

**Duration:** 37:21

**Scripture:** Matthew 6:33, Luke 4:18, Luke 15:14-17, John 20:21-23

**Topics:** "Evangelism", "Discipleship"

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## Description

In this sermon, the speaker emphasizes the importance of taking the responsibility of evangelism seriously. He refers to John 20:21, where Jesus tells his disciples, 'As my Father has sent me, even so send I you.' This statement reminds believers of their solemn responsibilities as the people of God. The speaker highlights three responsibilities: taking the place of Jesus, sharing his power through the Holy Spirit, and fulfilling his purpose of proclaiming forgiveness and changing lives. He emphasizes that one day believers will give an account of how they have fulfilled these responsibilities.

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## Transcript

Reading the Word of God from the Gospel of John, Chapter 20, verses 19 to 23. Our Lord's Resurrection Appearance to the Apostles, John 20, 19. Then the same day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled for fear of the Jews, came Jesus and stood in the midst and saith unto them, Peace be unto you.

And when he had so said, he showed unto them his hands and his side. Then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord. Then said Jesus to them again, Peace be unto you.

As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. And when he had said this, he breathed on them, and saith unto them, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Whosoever sins ye remit, they are remitted unto them.

And whosoever sins ye retain, they are retained. His commission to us. As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Our Lord said to his disciples, As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. This is the last of the commissions in the four Gospels. Toward the end of each of the Gospels, there is a commission given by our Lord.

And each of these commissions has a different emphasis. Matthew reads, All authority in heaven and in earth is given unto me. Go ye therefore.

And so Matthew, the Gospel of the King, emphasizes authority. We never have to ask, Is it our job to share the Gospel? We have the authority. In Mark, the emphasis is on activity.

The Lord working with them. And they went everywhere preaching the Gospel. Because Mark is the Gospel of the servant.

And you and I never have to ask, Am I a servant? Because he has called us to be servants. Luke's emphasis is on ability. Tarry till ye be endued with power from on high.

And you and I dare not seek to share the Gospel in our own strength. We must depend upon the power of the Holy Spirit. But John chapter 20 and verse 21 emphasizes not so much authority, although it's there.

Not so much activity, although it's there. And not so much ability, although he mentions it in verse 22. When I read John chapter 20 verse 21, When I hear the Lord Jesus Christ say to me, As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

There comes to me a tremendous feeling of solemnity and sobriety and responsibility. If there's one word I would write in the margin of my Bible next to that statement, It would be the word audacity. The audacity of Jesus Christ saying to a group of men, Fearful men, defeated men, failures.

The audacity of saying to them, As the Father has sent me, even so send I you. It seems ridiculous, but he says it. You see, we tend to take our Christian faith and opportunities for granted.

We have a tendency, those of us who have been saved for a few years or more, To take for granted all of this. And a new Christian reading through the gospel of John would come to this verse, And he would get excited. He would say, Jesus is saying to me, As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

That's amazing. Yet you and I can read it, and you and I can sing it. And we can still take very lightly, Very flippantly, carelessly, This whole matter of carrying the gospel of Jesus Christ to a lost world.

And not just to a lost world out there, but to the lost world right around us. Whenever you find yourself taking lightly the responsibility of evangelism, Turn to John chapter 20 and verse 21, And listen to the Lord Jesus say once again, As my Father hath sent me, even so send I you. Because in this statement, you will be reminded of the solemn responsibilities That we have as the people of God.

Now there are three of them. In verse 21, we have the responsibility of taking His place. In verse 22, we have the responsibility of sharing His power.

In verse 23, we have the responsibility of fulfilling His purpose. And if these three responsibilities do not wipe the levity and the carelessness off of our lives, Nothing will. We as Christians are joyful, but we carry responsibility in the midst of joy.

We as Christians are set free, but in our liberty we carry responsibility. We as Christians walk with God, and we have the joyful privilege of fellowship with Him. But with this privilege comes tremendous responsibility.

Let's look at these three responsibilities. And by the grace of God, let's go away from this service of worship, Sensing the awesomeness, the seriousness of being a Christian in a world that knows not Jesus Christ. First, we have the responsibility of taking His place.

As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. Have you ever had to take somebody's place? Have you ever been called in by the boss and had it said to you, Now, Mr. So-and-so has been with us for 35 years, he'll be retiring, you're taking his job. It's an awesome thing.

It must be an awesome thing when the newly elected President of the United States Has to step into some shoes that are rather large, And sit at a chair that is very large. One gets the impression that it's no place for midgets, And this is no place for midgets. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you.

We are taking His place. Now, what does that mean? Just think that through. What does it mean that we are taking His place? Well, there are a number of implications involved in this statement.

Number one, it means that we've been accepted in Christ. If the Father is sending the Son, and the Son is sending me, Then the Father has accepted me in the Son. You see, when Jesus came to this earth, He took my place.

He died my death for me, that I might live His life for Him. He has gone back to Heaven, and the only hands He has are ours. He's not going to reach down from Heaven with His nail-pierced hands and pass out a tract.

He's not going to sign a check. The only lips He has, ours. The only feet, ours.

We have taken His place. He took our place for us. He identified Himself with human nature and became man.

He identified Himself with our sorrows and our burdens and became a high priest. He identified Himself with my sins and became my Redeemer. And He says to me, I fulfilled my responsibility in taking your place.

Now you fulfill this responsibility in taking my place. Did you ever notice in the Scriptures how the Lord Jesus Christ identifies us with the Father? As my Father has loved me, I've loved you. That's an amazing statement.

The words that my Father gave to me, I've given to you. The glory that God gives to me, I give to you. He stands between us and the Father, and He receives from the Father and gives to us.

Then He says, you take what I've given you, you're accepted in Christ. Now represent me. It means that we're commissioned by Christ.

The Father sent Him. Forty times in the Gospel of John, you'll find Jesus talking about being sent, sent, sent. He didn't just show up.

He was sent. He had lived in the eternity's past, and when He came into this world, He was not a new person. He came in a new form, but He was not a new person.

He was sent. He was sent with a commission from the Father, and now He says, I am commissioning you. We are accepted in Christ, and we are commissioned by Christ, and we must become like Christ.

If we're going to represent Him, we have to be like Him. Last Friday was the anniversary of Mr. Moody's conversion, when Edward Kimball went into the back of that shoe store and led young D.L. Moody to Christ. And as D.L. Moody grew and became more like Christ, God sent him out to win people.

And so if I'm going to represent Jesus Christ, if I am taking His place, I must be accepted in Him, and I must be commissioned by Him, and He's commissioned all of us, and I must become like Him. And oh, that's the place where you and I so often have to weep and confess our sins. There have been times this past week when it's a good thing some unsaved people weren't around who knew we were Christians.

We weren't becoming like Jesus. There were times this past week when if the Lord Jesus had called us home while we were doing what we were doing, we would have been embarrassed. We must become like Him if we're going to represent Him.

And that's what the sanctification is all about. I meet people running from meeting to meeting, and seminar to seminar, and from book to book, and all of these things are good, but when you boil all of it down, it says this, the Holy Spirit of God wants to take the Word of God and make me more like the Son of God. We become like Him, and we are treated like Him.

He says, now if they've rejected me, they'll reject you. The servant is not greater than his master. If they don't know my Father and have no respect for my Father, they'll have no respect for you.

They're going to scourge you in the synagogues. Paul talks about filling up that which is lacking in the sufferings of Christ. Not his sufferings for our sins, that's finished.

His sufferings now, as people persecute his church. Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me? And if we are accepted in Christ, and if we are commissioned by Christ, and if we are becoming like Christ, then we are going to be treated like Christ. And they lied about Him.

And they persecuted Him. And they threw all sorts of insults at Him. And they called Him a drunkard.

And they called Him a blasphemer. And they said He was possessed of demons. The orthodox believers of His day crucified Him.

But it also means, if we're taking His place, that we're going to be rewarded by Christ. Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you and say all manner of evil against you falsely. Make sure it's false, for my sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad for so persecuted they the prophets before you and great is your reward in heaven. There will be rewards in heaven and there's going to be a special reward for those who have suffered for His sake. That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering.

It's an awesome responsibility we are taking His place. The world knows very little about Jesus Christ. All they know about Jesus Christ is what they see in us.

And that's very little. The world is not impressed with our theology. The world is not impressed with our doctrine.

The world is watching us, listening to us. Jesus said, ye are the light of the world. Let your light so shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father which is in heaven.

Ye are the salt of the earth. We are taking His place. Can you imagine our Lord Jesus having arrived back in heaven, conversing with some of His angels, and they're saying, oh Lord, we saw as those men forsook you.

We heard as Peter denied you. We saw them lock themselves into a room and hide in fear. And now you have given them the work to do? The audacity of it.

As my Father hath sent me, so send I you. We have the responsibility of taking His place. And so when you get on the bus tomorrow morning, remember, Jesus in you is on the bus.

And when you sit at your typewriter, or your desk, or drive your truck, or repair that machinery, or whatever it is you and I will be doing tomorrow, let's remember it should be Jesus Christ doing it in and through us. Not I, but Christ. We are taking His place.

That makes it very serious. That makes it very sobering. There's a second responsibility.

John chapter 20, verse 22. We are sharing His power. When He said, as my Father hath sent me, even so send I you.

Those men must have looked at Him in awe. And they were all thinking the same thing that you would have thought. You're sending us.

We are not equipped. Then He breathed upon them. And He said, receive ye the Holy Spirit.

It's interesting to trace the disciples' relationship to the Holy Spirit. Back in chapter 14 of the Gospel of John, we have the record of the Upper Room Discourse. Our Lord was preparing His disciples for His departure.

And He keeps talking about the Holy Spirit, the Spirit of Truth, whom the Father will send in my name. Now when the Holy Spirit has come, the Spirit, the Spirit, there's a great deal about the Holy Spirit in the Upper Room Discourse. Chapter 14, verse 16.

And I will pray the Father, and He shall give you another encourager, that He may abide with you forever, even the Spirit of Truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth Him not, neither knoweth Him. But ye know Him. Now how did they know the Holy Spirit? He hadn't even come yet.

Ye know Him, for He dwelleth with you, and He shall be in you. The first exposure the disciples had to the Holy Spirit was when the Holy Spirit dwelt with them in the person of Jesus Christ. When our Lord was conceived, He was conceived by the Holy Spirit.

The Father gave Jesus Christ the Holy Spirit without measure. He was filled with the Holy Spirit. What He did, He did in the power of the Holy Spirit.

And the disciples were able to see what the Holy Spirit can do in a human body. I find it so difficult to convince people that what Jesus did in His body here on earth, He did in the same power that's available to us. He laid aside His independent use of His own attributes.

He would not act as God independently. That's why He wouldn't turn stones into bread. That's why He wouldn't jump off the temple.

The same Holy Spirit who energized Jesus Christ energizes us. And they saw what the Holy Spirit can do in a person. And our Lord is saying the same Holy Spirit that you've known to be with you is going to be in you.

At Pentecost, the Holy Spirit came down and filled the believers. And the Holy Spirit baptized the believers collectively into a body, individually filled, collectively baptized. But I believe that our disciples' first exposure to the presence of the Spirit of God within was that night.

Our Lord Jesus breathed upon them and said, Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Perhaps He was speaking in anticipation, but I think it happened. I think that the Holy Spirit of God entered into the bodies of these disciples.

Not the fullness, not the baptism, but the presence. Now why did He breathe? The Holy Spirit is pictured under many different symbols, oil and fire and water and light and dew, a dove, a sword of the Spirit. Why did He breathe? It takes you right back to Genesis chapter 2. God made the first man.

He molded him out of clay. He breathed into him the breath of life. It's as though Jesus is saying, Now we have a new creation.

Through my death, burial, and resurrection, there is now a new creation. Receive ye the Holy Spirit. Just as Adam received life from God, so the church receives life from Jesus Christ.

And He breathed upon them. There are three verses in the New Testament that connect the Holy Spirit with the word not, N-O-T. In Romans chapter 8 and verse 15, we have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear.

We've received the spirit of truth, the spirit of liberty. 1 Corinthians 2.12, We have received not the spirit of this world, but the spirit which is of God, that we may know the things that are taught of God. 2 Timothy 1.7, We have not received the spirit of fear, but we have received the spirit of power and of love and of a sound mind.

This is the Holy Spirit. The spirit of liberty. Not a legalistic spirit.

Not a spirit of bondage. A spirit of life. Not a spirit of death.

Not a spirit of this world. Some Christians have the spirit of this world. They think like the world and their values are the values of the world and they're happy for the approval of the world.

But Jesus said, No, I'm giving you the Holy Spirit and you're going out into a world that doesn't know the Holy Spirit, therefore they won't understand you. You will be an enigma to them. You will be an enemy to them.

Whatever the world doesn't understand, it hates. And they're going to hate you. But they hated me.

We are sharing His power. Now, when someone hands power to you, that is a solemn responsibility. And our Lord has given to us the same power that helped to create the universe.

The spirit of God brooded upon the face of the waters. The same power that energized the Savior. The same power that baptized the church.

This power is ours. You see, He wouldn't dare say, You're going to take my place without first giving to us His power. And you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be witnesses unto me.

It has well been said, and I have often repeated it, if God were to take the Holy Spirit out of this world, much of what the church is doing would go right on and nobody would know the difference because we are energizing by our own power, our own wisdom, our own strength. Then when someone comes along to whom God gives the special calling and that special anointing of the Spirit, the church fights him. It happened to Wesley.

It happened to Moody. It's happening in our own day. We're taking His place.

We're sharing His power. And then in verse 23, we are fulfilling His purpose. Now don't misunderstand verse 23.

In verse 23, Jesus didn't give His disciples the priestly privilege of dispensing forgiveness. He gave them the ambassador's privilege of declaring forgiveness. None of the apostles ever said to anybody, in the name of Jesus, I forgive your sins.

You don't find that anywhere in the Bible. What He's saying in verse 23 is this. Jesus came to deal with sin.

For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son. For what purpose? That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved.

Now just take those two words, perish, save. He came to deal with sin. When He was born, He was born in such a way to remind us that we're sinners.

He had to be born, conceived by the Holy Spirit, that He might have a sinless nature. When you and I were born, we were born with a sinful nature. As He lived on earth, His very holy life exposed sin.

I am come a light into this world, said Jesus. When He died, He died to redeem us from sin. He didn't die a martyr with a lost cause.

He died a mediator with a finished work. And He's arisen from the dead and He's gone back to heaven and He intercedes for His church. And the church is here to continue the work that He was doing.

What work was He doing? He was dealing with sin. The first sermon that Jesus preached that we have a record of tells us how tragic sin is. You know, we live with sin.

We see it all around us. We see it in us. We commit it.

We get used to it. We get used to it. Listen to what Jesus had to say as He preached His first sermon.

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me because He hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He came for the bankrupt. Sin always leaves you poor.

And when He had spent all, there arose a great famine in that land and He began to be in want. Bankruptcy. The gospel to the poor.

He has sent me to heal the broken hearted. Broken hearted. There are more broken hearts in the city of Chicago because of sin than anything else.

Broken hearted. They aren't going to be cured with pills. They aren't going to be cured with counseling.

They're going to be cured when sin is dealt with. He has sent me to heal the broken hearted. To preach deliverance to the captives.

The bound. You see, Jesus came to help the bankrupt and the broken hearted and the bound. The people in bondage.

Sin is always bondage. Sin promises liberty and always brings bondage. The bondage of bad habits and the bondage of horrible memories and the bondage of a dirty conscience.

To preach deliverance to the captive and recovering of sight to the blind. He came for the blind. Satan has blinded the minds of them that believe not, lest the light of the glorious gospel of God should shine unto them.

Blind. To set at liberty them that are bruised. The bruised.

That word bruised means crushed. People are crushed. Crushed under burdens too heavy to bear.

Crushed with circumstances they just simply cannot face. And Jesus said all of this is caused by sin. Are you bankrupt spiritually? Sin.

Are you broken hearted? Sin. Bound? Bruised? Blind? Sin. He said I came to do business with sin.

I came to settle that problem. And you and I are a part of that. We are helping to fulfill his purpose.

Now how do we do this? We don't do it by going out and saying by the authority vested in me I declare your sins are forgiven. No apostle ever did that. Over in Acts chapter 10 when the apostle Peter and if anybody should have known about absolving sins it should have been Peter.

Peter is preaching to the household of Cornelius and here's what he says. He commanded us to preach unto the people and to testify that it is he who was ordained by God to be the judge of the living and the dead to him give all the prophets witness that's Jesus that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins and Peter opened his mouth to make the next statement and he couldn't speak. The Holy Spirit came down.

You know why? When he got to the word whosoever all those Gentiles said hey that's us. And they believed and the Holy Spirit came and they were saved. Then Peter says alright you've been saved.

Let's baptize you. A lot of people reverse that. Peter knew better.

Our Lord says to his disciples and to the others who were there in the upper room there were others there. He says to them I am giving you the privilege and the responsibility of helping to fulfill my purpose. I am not giving you the privilege of dispensing forgiveness.

I do that. Only Jesus can forgive sins. I am giving you the wonderful privilege and responsibility of declaring forgiveness and I can stand up and you can stand up just like the Apostle Peter and say whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sin.

That's what he's talking about. You see Peter first told them that they were sinners. That Jesus is the judge.

Then he told them that they can be saved because Jesus is the Savior. That's what it's all about. The blessed privilege of just lovingly declaring to people that sins can be forgiven.

Now this doesn't belong to a little cast of people specially ordained. It doesn't belong to any one church or group. This privilege, this responsibility has been given to all believers.

Wherever we go to share the good news that sins can be forgiven. I can't think of a more solemn position than that which you and I are in. If I speak to someone here who has been taking his Christian responsibilities lightly.

If you're saying it makes no difference whether or not I share in foreign missions. Somebody else will do it. It makes no difference whether or not I shall help to get the gospel out.

Somebody else will do it. I can be a spectator. Listen to what Jesus says.

As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. We are taking His place. And someday we will give an account of what we've done.

Receive ye the Holy Spirit. We are sharing His power. And someday we shall give an accounting of how we've used our gifts and our abilities in the power of the Spirit.

Declare the forgiveness of sins. We are fulfilling His purpose. God's purpose in this world is to change people's lives.

That sinners might be saved. That the bound might be set free. The blind might have their eyes opened.

The bankrupt might share in the riches of Christ. The bruised and the broken might be healed. That's why we're here.

And one day we're going to give an accounting of what we've done. Have we fulfilled our responsibilities? Jesus fulfilled His responsibilities. He was able to come to the Father and say, Father, I have finished the work which Thou gavest me to do.

Now, I'm turning the work over to them. I pray not for the world, but I pray for them whom Thou hast given me out of the world. As You have sent me, I'm sending them.

The next time you're tempted to stay home from a church service because it's not too convenient, I hope you'll hear Jesus say, As my Father has sent me, even so send I You. The next time a missionary shares a burden and all those missionaries do is ask for things, I hope you'll hear Jesus say, As the Father has sent me, even so send I You. The next time some project at the Moody Church, be it Sunday school or daycare center or radio or home missions or foreign missions or whatever it may be, has some need, and you're tempted to say, Well, I don't approve of that work anyway.

I hope you'll hear Jesus say, As my Father has sent me, so send I You. And I say to myself, I cannot do this for you, but I say to myself, If Jesus fulfilled toward me His responsibilities the way I fulfill mine, how much would I have? Where would I be? So send I You. That song was written up in Canada, written by a lady who was a Christian and she was very lonely in a very, very difficult situation.

And she sat down one evening and just wrote those words out to encourage her own heart that the difficulty she was going through, Jesus had gone through, and she shouldn't be surprised. When John

Peterson was working at the Moody Bible Institute over at WMBI, one day somebody handed him those words written out and said, Why don't you use this on one of your programs? I think he was responsible for six or seven programs at that time. So he did.

Then one time when he was on vacation, he found these words. It was down in Wichita. And he put these words in the piano and sat at the piano and just began to play and the music came.

And that's how So Send I You was written. Later on there were those who said the song was just a little bit too dismal, a little bit too mournful, just a little bit too demanding. And so Margaret Clarkson wrote another set of words, a little more joyful, but they've never really taken on.

These words that we sang before are the words that we know from our heart are the words we need. As my Father has sent me, even so send I you. But Lord, He sent you to a cross, even so send I you.

He sent you to misunderstanding, even so send I you. He sent you to finish a great work, even so send I you. I hope when I get to the end of my life and it may be sooner than I expect, I'll be able to look up to the Father and say, Father, the hour has come.

I have finished the work that you gave me to do. Gracious Father in Heaven, You have laid upon us tremendous responsibilities and as we look at them in love, they become great privileges. The privilege of taking His place.

The privilege of receiving His power. The privilege of fulfilling His purpose. Oh Lord God, remind us that we are Yours, we are His, we are sent ones, we are under orders.

I pray for some here today who have never responded to Your call that they may come and trust Christ. Pray for careless Christians who need a new dedication of seriousness about the Lord's work. And so do for us what needs to be done that we might do what You want done for Jesus' sake.

Amen.

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