If you’ve been to Disney World, then you know that the Magic Kingdom is a self-contained little city.[[1]](#endnote-1) It has its own power generating plant, police department, urgent care facilities and well-developed, multimodal transportation infrastructure. You can sleep, eat, recreate, lounge on the beach, learn and shop – almost everything you’d want -- without leaving the kingdom. If you had enough money, of course, you could withdraw into Disney World, staying happy and comfortable without having to deal with any of the world outside its walls, without having to go out among those who aren’t part of the magic.

As Christians, we can often get many of our own needs met within the Christian community. Most, if not all of our friends are Christians – maybe most of them even from within this one church. Social events and good eating opportunities abound -- if there aren’t enough within our own church community, we can find more by expanding that community to include a nearby church, i.e., other Christians. Fulfillment and enrichment can be found in volunteering for new tasks or attending new studies within the church. In fact, we can, and perhaps all too often do, withdraw into the Christian community, staying happy and comfortable without having to deal with the world beyond the walls, without having to go out to those who aren’t already part of the body of Christ.

But Jesus doesn’t want that. In fact, Jesus commands differently. Because just as God sent Jesus from the comforts of heavenly kingship to us on earth, Jesus sends us from the comforts of our own pew, the comforts of associating solely with Christians, the comforts of being surrounding only by Christians, into the world. God sent Jesus to become a mortal, to live and to suffer out of His love for the world, to be in the world but not to conform to all the misplaced values of the world, to seek to show God’s love to everyone. And Jesus sends us to live and to suffer out of our love for the world, to be in the world but not to conform to all the misplaced values of the world, to seek to show God’s love to everyone. And while Disney World and church are both wonderful places that offer happiness and refreshment, they aren’t to be used to isolate ourselves from our real mission. We can’t keep Jesus just for ourselves. We have to share Him.

Rebecca Manley Pippert, formerly a national consultant in evangelism with Inter-Varsity Christian Fellowship, writes in her book “Out of the Salt Shaker and Into the World”:

We must not become, as John Stott puts it, “a rabbit-hole Christian”—the kind who pops his head out of a hole, leaves his Christian roommate in the morning and scurries to class, only to frantically search for a Christian to sit by (an odd way to approach a mission field). Thus he proceeds from class to class. When dinner comes, he sits with the Christians in his dorm at one huge table and thinks, “What a witness!” From there he goes to his all-Christian Bible study, and he might even catch a prayer meeting where the Christians pray for the non-believers on his floor. (But what luck that he was able to live on the only floor with seventeen Christians!) Then at night he scurries back to his Christian roommate. Safe! He made it through the day and his only contacts with the world were those mad, brave dashes to and from Christian activities.[[2]](#endnote-2)

The Christian attitude, then, is to be one of mission – to be one of going forth. If we listen carefully to the words we will say as we renew of baptismal covenant with Archer, we will see that they focus on proclaiming the Good News in word and action, in seeking to serve Christ in all persons and in striving for justice and peace. These promises focus on mission – on going forth. Yes, we need our Christian community to equip us, to refresh us – just as this community does for us and will for Archer. But that equipping and refreshing is to enable us to spend most of our time in the world with non-Christians, without conforming to the negative parts of the world. We are baptized, sealed as Christ’s own forever and sent into the world to love and to serve, just as Jesus was sent to us.

As individuals, perhaps we are called to coach soccer, or to start a school for those on the autism spectrum. Perhaps we are called to go camping or to go dancing with non-Christian friends. Perhaps we are called to protest a law that treats a group of people unfairly. Or perhaps we are just called to pay attention to the needs of the clerks in the stores we frequent.

As a church, we are called not just to be open to that new person coming and joining us in our building, but rather to our also going beyond our walls to love non-Christians, without judging them.

When Jesus prayed the words “As you have sent me into the world, so have I sent them into the world,” Jesus knew that the only way the world would find out about who Jesus was would be through the mission of the disciples. Likewise, the only way the world today will find out who is Jesus is through us.

We’re not called to isolate ourselves, meeting all our own needs and comforts in a bubble filled only with Christians. As God has sent Jesus, Jesus sends us out --- away from what is comfortable – into the world.

Amen

1. Adapted from Richard Stearns, “Shedding Lethargy,” *Leadership Journal* (Winter, 2012), found on Preachingtoday.com. [↑](#endnote-ref-1)
2. # Hughes, R. K. (1999). *John: that you may believe* (p. 402). Wheaton, IL: Crossway Books quoting Rebecca Manley Pippert, *Out of the Saltshaker & Into the World: Evangelism as a Way of Life,* IVP Books, 1999.

   [↑](#endnote-ref-2)