

Local Mission Sermon

Recently someone asked for some more teaching on how we do mission in our day to day life. Other's often referring to this as evangelism/outreach. We talk a lot about mission and the mission of the church and often we do so based on the great commission of Jesus

*Matthew 28:18 And Jesus came and said to them, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.
28:19 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,
28:20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."*

The great commission tells us what to do and to talk about, but does it tell us how are we to do mission and how we are to make disciples and what we are personally expected to contribute to mission?

Well I started my research for this sermon by looking up the word mission or missionary in the bible- to my surprise it never came up. It was at this point that I realised most of what I have come to know and believe about how to do mission and evangelism is made up by people and often has no biblical basis. Now this is not necessarily a bad thing [as long as the message is not compromised] because it means we can adapt our methods to suit our culture, but it is a bad thing when we try to copy other people's methods if they don't work with our culture.

It should be noted that what we do on Sunday morning is part of mission. In this very place and time we baptise people and teach people to observe the commandments of Jesus. What the service lacks in reaching out into the community it makes up for with pure obedience to the commission. Basically I am saying that the Sunday morning services follow Jesus instructions in what we do.

But does the great commission tell us how to do mission?

Well I think it does. It is subtle though. We look at the final line and we notice two words; **you** [us] and **I** [Jesus].

1. We are to do the action and look at our skills abilities etc
2. We must rely on Jesus being with us in our endeavour

"You" are valuable to God, he chose you to be a missionary/ evangelist where you are and as you are. How you feel about that is not important. How you feel about yourself is. God thinks you can do it. God wants to help you do it.

He does know you can't do it alone so he promises to be with you in it.

Remember he is not after big things that may have an effect because you brought in a powerful preacher, he is after you using what you have and talking to people you know.

EXAMPLE: If you get asked what you are doing this weekend say "I'm going to church" plant the seeds that might one day lead to a conversation, but don't manipulate the conversation immediately so you can spout off everything you know about God. Shine a light on your life so that your friends ask you about God.

If you read the Gospels carefully you will notice that apart from the disciples there are only a few people Jesus goes to and only one he goes out of his way to go to. Everyone else is drawn to Jesus. CS Lewis sums up nicely what the problem has been for most modern evangelism.

"There have been some who were so occupied in spreading Christianity they never gave a thought to Christ."

We are marketing our religion as the solution to all of life's problems or worse as a form of entertainment. But ultimately you either want to be with God or you don't.

This does not mean we stop reaching out to people in need or we stop providing Christian entertainment for people but what it means is that we do these things out of love for other people not purely out of a desire to fulfil the great commission.

EXAMPLE: if you make a meal for someone who is starving do it out of compassion for them, not as a means of evangelising them.

If you advertise a concert, put on a concert but don't use the concert as bait to suck people in so you can preach the gospel to them unless you have advertised it as a concert and a preacher.

If we trick people they will see us as devious, not motivated by love.

Romans 14:16 Let not then your good be evil spoken of:

It amazes me that many Christian ministries are so results or numbers focused that they fail to realise the damage they are doing to the reputation of the church - the people of God.

Paul is condemning good actions and good intentions that do not come from Love.

1Corinthians 13:3 And if I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and if I give my body to be burned, but have not love, it profiteth me nothing.

So why do we get it wrong? -Three reasons

1/ we forget God chose us to do the work –not a programme

The majority of the time we start off meaning well, but we get told that our idea is not going to work or we experience rejection when we try to be our self. This can result in retreat from small personal acts of mission to the safety of the larger group initiative.

What happens next is the group has its own momentum and our personal touch that God put in us gets somewhat lost.

Then we get busy, phoning people attending meetings, and keeping up with the new ever increasing demands of our mission.

Finally our natural mission field [our work, school or family and friends] becomes our haven; a place of refuge from the mission we are involved with already and as such we fail to operate effectively in the very place God put us at first.

2/ the great misunderstanding-we make mission our reason for existing

The great commission references the great commandment and not the other way around.

Matthew 22:36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the Law?"

22:37 And he said to him, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.

22:38 This is the great and first commandment.

22:39 And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbour as yourself.

22:40 On these two commandments depend all the Law and the Prophets."

"Jesus' primary concern—the very first petition of the prayer he teaches—is that more and more people, and more and more peoples, come to hallow God's name. This is the reason the universe exists. Missions exists because this hallowing does not....Missions is not the ultimate goal of the church. Worship is. Missions exists because worship doesn't."

— **John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad! : The Supremacy of God in Missions 2d ed.**

When Jesus says in the great commission "teach them to observe all that I have commanded you" he is saying teach them to LOVE ME and teach them to LOVE ONEANOTHER.

We cannot teach love unless we are motivated by it.

2Corinthians 5:14 For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died;

5:15 and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised.

- 5:16 From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer.
- 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come.
- 5:18 All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation;
- 5:19 that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation.
- 5:20 Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.
- 5:21 For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

The summary of the gospel is simply you get what Christ deserved because he took what you deserved. What Jesus has done for us transforms us into people like himself who are motivated by love to give up some of the comforts of our own lives to help others. This leads to the next problem...

3/ sometimes we accept the blessings of God but don't pass them on

Love of the gifts God has given us, both material and spiritual, can get in the way of the love of God and the love of others. What are we prepared to give up for Christ? Do we think we are here to simply receive or is the idea of giving part of our faith as well?

“The point is that an \$80,000 or a \$180,000 salary does not have to be accompanied by an \$80,000 or a \$180,000 lifestyle. God is calling us to be conduits of his grace, not cul-de-sacs. Our great danger today is thinking that the conduit should be lined with gold. It shouldn't. Copper will do. No matter how grateful we are, gold will not make the world think that our God is good; it will make people think that our god is gold. That is no honor to the supremacy of his worth.”

– **John Piper, Let the Nations Be Glad! : The Supremacy of God in Missions 2d ed.**

EXAMPLE: The saddest thing I hear a lot as a leader is a person who has been a believer for a while thinking the church is meant to appeal to them in some way. So they look for the perfect church for them. Why not Musselburgh I ask: “The preaching is not good enough here; I don't like the worship; the children's ministry is better elsewhere.” They say.

Now please understand I am not saying that there isn't room for improvement in our ministries [I am personally a believer in constructive criticism] but I am concerned with the underlying belief behind some comments. And I wonder why people like this come to church; is it for God and his church or simply for their own needs to be met?

We may not have professional preachers or paid musicians, and the kids can be a bit distracting at times, but God does meet us here every Sunday. Can I get an Amen!

We will never succeed in local mission and growing the local churches if we keep closing them down and travelling to the fancy new super churches where the individuals calling is swallowed up in conformity to the collective impersonal agenda.

Take home thought

Let go of the great grand vision of mission you have and focus on what God is doing in your life. Trust God to draw people near to you and create openings for conversations by telling people you are a Christian

YOU DON'T HAVE TO FORCE THE GOSPEL ONTO PEOPLE, if they know that you are a follower of Jesus; then expect them to ask you about him.

Show people with your love and kindness that you are worth talking to.

Show them you love other Christians. Attend church to bless others.

John 13:34 A new commandment I give unto you, that ye love one another; even as I have loved you, that ye also love one another.

13:35 By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another.

Sow the seed in faith and don't doubt the effect of your words and deeds

Sometimes the little things matter the most

Matthew 10:42 *And whoever gives one of these little ones even a cup of cold water because he is a disciple, truly, I say to you, he will by no means lose his reward."*

If you truly have the law of God written on your heart and you are a follower of God what will be your reward in heaven?

I tell you two things

1. You will be with God the one you love above all else and who loves you
2. You will be with others people who you also love

This is the outworking of the great commandment

Therefore when we succeed in mission and a person becomes a follower of Christ we add to our treasures in heaven.

Little Is Much When God Is in It

Kittie L. Suffield, 1924

1. In the harvest field now ripened
There's a work for all to do;
Hark! the voice of God is calling,
To the harvest calling you.
 - *Refrain:*
Little is much when God is in it!
Labor not for wealth or fame;
There's a crown, and you can win it,
If you go in Jesus' name.
2. In the mad rush of the broad way,
In the hurry and the strife,
Tell of Jesus' love and mercy,
Give to them the Word of Life.
3. Does the place you're called to labour
Seem so small and little known?
It is great if God is in it,
And He'll not forget His own.
4. Are you laid aside from service,
Body worn from toil and care?
You can still be in the battle,
In the sacred place of prayer.
5. When the conflict here is ended
And our race on earth is run,
He will say, if we are faithful,
"Welcome home, My child—well done!"