

“Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It . . .” (Part 2)

Introduction

The Text

⁴⁴ Then he said to them, “These are my words that I spoke to you while I was still with you, that everything written about me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead, ⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44–49)

Part 2

- A. This is now part two of what we began last time entitled: “Your Mission, Should You Choose to Accept It.”
1. I’m just ripping that title off from the old Mission Impossible shows and movies, where the lead guy would receive a mission of some sort from the upper authorities, and then, it would seem, he has the choice whether to accept it or not.
 2. And I borrow the language for these sermons here because I think that’s really what we have before us in our text. Jesus, now as the resurrected King, is giving his apostles (and, as we saw last time, you and I) a mission. And, by the end of this, we have to decide whether we’re really going to accept it or not.
- B. And, of course, as I said last time, before we can really make up our minds on our matter, we have to know just what this mission entails. And so that’s what we’ve been giving ourselves to.
1. Last time we looked at the What and the Who of this mission.
 - a. Regarding the What, we saw that we are, before anything else, being commissioned here to proclaim the gospel—the news concerning Jesus’ death and resurrection—and that in light of that we are to call for repentance for the forgiveness of sins. That’s the What.
 - b. Regarding the Who, I made the case that while Jesus is clearly here commissioning the now eleven apostles for this task in particular, you and I are included in this commission, as we follow downstream from the apostles and take up the baton in a subordinate and subsidiary way.

2. So we've seen the What and the Who of this mission. But now this morning we're going to consider the Where and the When—and with the When we'll really come to discern the How of it all as well. So let's get going!

(3) The Where

To All the Nations

- A. For this we should begin by focusing in on the latter part of v. 47 there. But begin back up in v. 46: “⁴⁶ [A]nd said to them, ‘Thus it is written, that the Christ should suffer and on the third day rise from the dead,⁴⁷ and that repentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations . . .’” (vv. 46-47).
 1. Stop there. “[T]o all the nations.” We touched on this only momentarily last time, and I should like to consider it in more detail here now.
- B. These words capture the global, even cosmic, scale of this redemption that's been accomplished by Christ at the cross.
 1. This is not just good news for a select few here or there, this is good news for the world.
 2. Therefore, the mission is proclaim it, preach it, herald it “to all nations.” There is no one outside the scope of God's concern.

In Luke's Gospel

- A. This has been a massive theme of Luke's gospel to this point. Luke in particular, when contrasted with the other gospel writers, is well known for his impassioned accent on this very point. For example . . .
- B. You may recall that Luke alone traces the genealogy of Jesus not just back through David to Abraham, like Matthew does, but all the way back to Adam (Luke 3:38).
 1. Why? Because Jesus will be Savior not just of Israel, and those who have come from Abraham, but of the whole world—for the entirety of the human race has come from Adam.
 2. And like Paul would later say: “[A]s in Adam all die, so also in Christ shall all be made alive” (1 Cor. 15:22). He's not just come to save Israel. He's got his eyes and heart set on the world, the nations.
 - a. I love what Isa. 49:6 says prophetically of Jesus, the Servant of YHWH: “It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”
 - i. It's too light a thing for Jesus to just be Savior of the Jews. Come on. Do you see his muscles? That's the picture in my mind. It's like Jesus is at the gym and he's just yoked to the max, and someone comes in and put a like a

few ten pound weights on his bar. And you're just going are you crazy? That's too light for him. Homeboy can lift a thousand times that, he's got muscles underneath his muscles. It's too light. Israel. Put the world on his back. Let him squat that. Let him hold the nations up.

- C. Luke alone tells the story, not just of the twelve apostles sent out to proclaim the kingdom of God (Luke 9), but of the 72 (or the 70 in some manuscripts) (Luke 10).
 - 1. This number, though initially perhaps seemingly random and a bit odd, is actually understood by many commentators to be symbolically significant—meant to direct the readers back to Gen. 10, the section of Scripture referred to as the “table of nations”—because there we see all the nations of the world as they're traced out from Noah and his sons after the flood. And wouldn't you know it, there are 72 listed there [LXX] (or again 70 in some versions [MT]).
 - a. Implication: the mission of Jesus isn't just for the twelve tribes of Israel, it's for all the nations of the world.
- D. And, of course, Luke alone is explicit in the fact that he's writing his gospel for what would seem to be a Gentile in particular—a guy by the name of Theophilus (Luke 1:3), which is a Greek name, not a Hebrew name.
 - 1. No wonder Luke is so often trying to make the point that the gospel is good news not just for Israel but for the world. He wants Theophilus to see himself in view here. He wants us to see ourselves in all this as well.
 - a. And, of course, we can't forget that Luke himself was very likely a Gentile (cf. Col. 4:11-14), the only Gentile author in all the Bible. So he owes his own salvation and life to this truth: that the gospel of Jesus Christ is not just good news for the Jews, it's good news for the nations!

In the Old Testament

- A. Anyone reading the OT carefully should not have been surprised by this. This has always been the plan. Although, of course, there was a great mystery in how it would all unfold.
- B. Read Isa. 2:2 for example, which outlines the cosmic scope of God's redemptive plan which he'll work out through his Servant, namely Jesus: “It shall come to pass in the latter days that the mountain of the house of the LORD shall be established as the highest of the mountains, and shall be lifted up above the hills; and all the nations shall flow to it”
 - 1. It's beautiful imagery, isn't it? But the picture is that the nations will somehow come flowing in. So Israel would have thought: “Ah, okay, so they're going to come to us. Well and good, I don't have to go anywhere.”
 - a. But here Jesus is saying that the only way the nations will come flowing into Jerusalem is if those there in Jerusalem go flowing out to them. In other words, the only way people will start coming into the church is if the church starts going out.

- C. And, you see, if only they would have kept reading they would have seen it.
1. The book of Isaiah begins with this grand vision of the nations flowing into Jerusalem. But it ends with Jerusalem flowing out. Look at *Isa. 66:18-20*: “¹⁸ [T]he time is coming to gather all nations and tongues. And they shall come and shall see my glory,¹⁹ and I will set a sign among them. And from them I will send survivors to the nations, to Tarshish, Pul, and Lud, who draw the bow, to Tubal and Javan, to the coastlands far away, that have not heard my fame or seen my glory. And they shall declare my glory among the nations.²⁰ And they shall bring all your brothers from all the nations as an offering to the LORD, on horses and in chariots and in litters and on mules and on dromedaries, to my holy mountain Jerusalem, says the LORD, just as the Israelites bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of the LORD.”
 - a. How do the nations come into the people of God? The people of God go out to them and bring them in.

Two Implications

- A. Let me draw out a couple implications from this . . .

Implication #1: This Is Good News for You . . . So Are You Receiving?

- A. One implication we can't miss here is that this means the gospel is for us. I don't think we have any ethnic Jews here right? We're all Gentiles. We're all a part of these “nations” here.
1. Which means we're not just supposed to go on this mission, we're first the object of it. The gospel has come to us. That's why we're here in the first place.
- B. So are you receiving God's grace to you in Jesus?
1. I never get tired of telling you that there's room for you at the table, that his arms are open wide, that his blood is sufficient a payment for your sin, that you have not sinned yourself outside the scope of God's mercy.

- a. The gospel is not just for the Jews, for the clean, for the kosher, for those with the law.
- b. The gospel is also, and especially, for the Gentile, for the nations, for the filthy, for the sinner . . . for you, and for me.

Implication #2: This Is Good News for Others . . . So Are You Going?

- A. But, having established that this is good news for us, and we can receive it, we have to then consider this second implication: that this is good news for others, and, therefore, we ought be going.
1. The bottom line is: the heart of a Christian should bubble forth with desire for others to come to know God in Jesus. There is no place for self-oriented stagnation in the Christian life.

- a. If God's grace is flowing to you it will be, it must be, flowing through you, from you, to others, to the nations. So is it?
- B. Let me come at it this way. When's the last time you cried over the sheer number of people in this world that don't know Jesus, many of whom haven't even heard his name? Does that ever stir you?
 - 1. Sadly, I would imagine that many in this room, myself included, felt more stirred emotionally by the Will Smith-Chris Rock debacle at the Oscars than we ever have about the state of spiritual lostness in the world. Is that too bold?
 - a. We got all worked up about that, but when's the last time we got worked up by the fact that billions of people every day strut up and slap the face of God, as it were.
 - b. When's the last time we got stirred by the overwhelming reality that, according to the latest data from the [Center for the Study of Global Christianity](#), 28 percent of the almost eight billion people in this world have never heard the gospel, and they're living in their sin, hurling towards hell. That's over 2 billion people. When's the last time I even shed a tear for that?
 - i. I can't remember for myself, honestly. I'm too busy crying about my own stuff. I lose sight of it. We aren't moved by what moves the heart of God. And that's a problem. Christ forgive us . . . and change us!
 - 2. There are more than 2.5 billion Christians altogether (including Catholic, Orthodox, Protestant, etc.) and only 435,000 foreign missionaries.
 - a. That means that we're sending just a little over 0.01 percent of our personnel to the nations.
 - 3. And, of course, if you want to know what a person values, follow the money right? Well, the total annual income of Christians in the world is \$53 trillion. But the amount we spend on foreign missions is \$52 billion.
 - a. Sounds like a lot, but what it breaks down to is that Christians today spend a little more than 0.09 percent of our income on this mission to the nations.
- C. And we're left asking why? Why is this the case . . . for me, for you? I know there are some in here who break the mold, and I thank God for you. But for the majority of us, why?
 - 1. Well, I think when it comes down to it, it's either that (1) we don't really believe, or (2) we don't really care.
 - a. On the one hand, faithfulness to this mission arises from the deep-seated conviction that, so far as reality is concerned, God is the most glorious, sin is the most heinous, hell is the most grievous, heaven is the most joyous, and the cross of Christ is the most precious . . . because on the cross, Jesus takes my sin, suffers my hell, throws open heaven's gates, and brings me back to God.

- i. If you believe that, then missions is everything. Because missions is taking the most precious gospel and going to a people who are desperate for it.
 - ii. But if you don't believe that, missions is a good idea, something to pray about, something to give .01 percent of our people and .09 percent of our money to.
- b. On the other hand, we may believe it, but we just don't care. (It's hard to say which is worse, right?) We're just too busy, too caught up in our career, or our 5 year plans, or our comforts, or whatever.
 - i. Jesus came, lived, suffered, died, rose with this singular mission in view, to bring good news of forgiveness and salvation to the nations. And then he calls us into it, and we go: "Meh, can't you get someone else to do it?"

Beginning from Jerusalem

- A. Now, I know this is quite searching and not a little convicting. But Jesus does have something else to say about the Where, and it's interesting and helpful I think.
- B. You see, I pulled his sentence up short there. Look at how [v. 47](#) ends: "[\[R\]epentance for the forgiveness of sins should be proclaimed in his name to all nations, beginning from Jerusalem.](#)"
 - 1. "[\[B\]eginning from Jerusalem.](#)" Now, this little note is massively significant—it's significant redemptive historically, missiologically, and personally. Let me show you what I mean . . .

Redemptive Historically

- A. So far as redemptive history is concerned, beginning in Jerusalem is fundamental to God's plan for saving the world, as we've already been alluding to in texts like those in [Isa. 2](#) and [Isa. 66](#).
 - 1. God has set up base camp for gospel advance there in Jerusalem really, that's ground zero, that's the center of gospel gravity, that's the launchpad for missions, that's where it all begins.
 - a. Because that's what God had promised, that's what God had planned; because that's where the temple was, and of course that's where One who truly was the fulfillment of all the temple stood for, namely Jesus, was crucified and raised up from the dead.
- B. So of course, all of this is "[beginning from Jerusalem.](#)" Redemptive historically it had to be this way.

Missiologically

- A. Then there's something relevant to missiology in this as well. In other words: we learn something about the mission of the church and how missions works.
- B. Sometimes we think missions doesn't happen here.

1. Missions is something that goes on over there—across an ocean or two. That’s where the missionaries are.
 2. We’re just regular Christians. And we can give our money to missions to those who are over there, but we can’t engage in it, because God has called us here. So we’ll give, but we don’t have to go.
- C. But I don’t think that’s the case.
1. If you look at this, Jesus doesn’t say: “You’ll be living the mission once you get to unreached peoples, or once you go overseas or something.”
 2. He says: “You begin missions right there in Jerusalem.”
 - a. There is no geographical line in God’s mind that identifies where missions is happening and where it’s not. Such boundaries I think are arbitrary and artificial.
 - b. Instead, I would argue that the Bible presents us with but one single tapestry called missions—a tapestry interwoven with all these various threads. And whether you’re there or here, you’re not just to be supporting missions, you are to be doing missions.
- D. In Luke’s companion volume to this gospel, the book of Acts, he records this same conversation Jesus has with his disciples in a little more detail. And there he says to them in [Acts 1:8](#): “[Y]ou will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”
1. There you see the various threads woven into this tapestry of missions you could say: [Jerusalem](#), [Judea](#), [Samaria](#), and [the end of the earth](#).
 - a. And he’s saying all of that is the mission. It’s not like once you get to Samaria or the end of the earth, then it’s happening, no it’s all a part of that.
- E. So the first missiological principle we see here then is that the mission is not just global it’s local. It’s not just to all nations out there, it’s [“beginning from Jerusalem.”](#)
- F. And that sets up a second principle I would give, which is this: if you want to start to reach the nations, start right where you are.
1. So often we can think: “Oh if I could just get overseas, cross an ocean or two, then I’d be a missionary, then I’d really be radical for God, then I’d really proclaim the gospel and live all out.”
 - a. But that’s not how it works. You go over there, and you’ll be the same person you are here. It may seem new and fresh for a little bit, but then it becomes the new normal. So the principle here again is: start right where you are. And don’t wait for tomorrow, start today.
- G. What we see in the book of Acts, ironically, is that faithfulness here and now is how we get there then.

1. It's as these early Christians are faithful to proclaim the gospel in their hometown that God connects the dots for them and moves them out towards the nations (cf. [Acts 8](#)). And it'll be the same for us.

D. So it's as Spurgeon has famously said: "Every Christian . . . is either a missionary or an impostor."

1. Those are your two options. You don't get to wiggle out and put the onus on someone else. This is for all of us. It's sad, isn't it, that so often we think of this as a burden . . . it's truly the highest privilege.

Personally

- A. And that leads us to the personal aspect then, where, again, we have to ask: are we doing it? Are we living on mission, as missionaries in this city? Are we open to whatever God is doing right around us? Are we willing to go wherever God might call us?

The Missionary Lifestyle

- A. But there's more I wanted to consider here for a moment. Building off of this principle that missions starts right where we are, I want to talk about something I'd call the "missionary lifestyle."
- B. I think to this point we've already been pushing back a bit against some of the more common errors we're prone to make so far as missions is concerned.
1. For one thing, we're prone to think that missions is overseas somewhere only, and I hope we see now, no it's also right here.
 2. For another thing, if we accept that it's right here, we're prone to think missions is simply inviting in, let unbelievers come to us and then the pastor can evangelize or whatever.
 - a. But we see from [Isa. 66](#) and from [Luke 24](#), the way people come in is by us going out.
 3. So then we're prone, I think, to another error which is to say: "Okay we'll go out but for an hour here or an hour there." Missions and evangelism become a slot in our busy schedule. We do it and then we're done."
 - a. And, while that certainly has some merit and it's better than nothing, there is something else I'd like to call us into and help us develop. It's what I'm calling the missionary lifestyle. This is where missions is not just some program or activity here or there, it's all of life.
- C. In the gospels, for example, Jesus' mission cannot be distinguished from his everyday life. They are one and the same.

1. Is he eating dinner, or is he on mission? Yes. Is he fishing, or is he on mission? Yes. Is he traveling, or is he on mission? Yes. Is he resting, or is he on mission? Yes.
 - a. And so should it be for us as well. It's as Brad Watson has said: "The missional church is not about adding activities to an already busy life; rather, it is a matter of being yourself in the everyday with gospel intentionality."

- D. I've wanted for some time now put something in our hands that could help us develop this missionary lifestyle and instinct. You should have gotten one of these little bookmarks we made and you may want to pull that out and look at it now, I'll be referring to it momentarily.
 1. You'll see there I've identified what I'd consider to be the four basic steps of a missionary lifestyle. I began developing these thoughts way back in the [Every Saint Sent](#) sermons from [Luke 9](#), so you may recognize them, though they've taken on a little different form now. I've also been inspired by an article by Tony Merida entitled "[Don't Overcomplicate Evangelism](#)"—I'd encourage you to check it out.
 - a. But you'll see that the four basic steps here form a helpful little acronym: PACT, which reminds us I suppose that we're not only being commissioned by God into this, we're also in covenant with him. And more than that we're agreeing together as a church to step towards this broken city on mission for Jesus.
 - i. But the four steps are Presence, Awareness, Courage, and Time. Let's consider these briefly now one by one.

Step #1: Presence

- A. With the idea of Presence, I'm simply referring to the fact that you and I have been put here by God on purpose, and we are already involved in the lives of so many different people who don't know Jesus, people who need the gospel, and need it from you.

- B. So you think about your various networks of relationships, as it were. Drawing on Merida's article, I put five categories on the bookmark for you to consider.
 1. There's Family—people with whom you share a common biology;
 2. Friends—people with whom you already hang out and share common interests;
 3. Coworkers—people with whom you share a common vocation (e.g. Engineer, student, mother, etc.);
 4. Neighbors—people with whom you share a common geography;
 5. Acquaintances—people with whom you share a common path (e.g. those you run into at shops, the gym, your kid's school, the homeless woman you pass on the street, etc.).

- C. For most of us, if you were to stop and make a list at this point, this is probably a lot of people.
 1. But for some of us we need to actually try to cultivate more presence. We live isolated, especially as of late right? So we have to put ourselves in the path of people we're hoping to reach.

- a. We become regulars at a coffee shop; we go for a walk in the neighborhood every evening around the same time and of course you're going to bump into your neighbors; you join a club or sign your kids up for soccer or something. You pursue Presence.

Step #2: Awareness

- A. But now we come to this idea of Awareness. And this is the difference, really, between being merely present and being truly present, if you know what I mean.
 1. In the first case you're there, but you're not there, at least not for God. You're not aware of what he might be doing in these relationships and the gospel opportunities that are opening up. You're just waiting in line for a taco, or trying to get your schoolwork done, or whatever. You're not living on mission and looking for open doors.
 - a. We need not just Presence, then, we also need Awareness.
- B. This is Jesus as he's trying to pull away to get some rest but a hungry crowd finds him, so he feeds them ([Luke 9](#)); or as he's walking along the road to Jerusalem and these lepers run up to him, so he heals them ([Luke 17](#)); or when he's thirsty and looking to get some water but there's a woman there at the well who needs his care, so he talks with her and loves her ([John 4](#)).
 1. You see, he's not merely present, he's truly present, and he sees opportunity to serve these people in the midst of the everyday stuff of life. And his whole ministry seems to play out this way. It would appear as if, in one sense, he's not exactly planning any of it. He is just doing life with eyes open, on mission along the way.
- C. And that's how we should be for us. As we attempt to be truly present with those whom God has placed us near and is calling us to, as we hear their hearts and get to know their stories, we'll become aware of countless ways we can show and share the good news of Jesus with them. We'll be able to identify things you can do to move the person one step closer to Christ.
 1. We'll find that we can pray for them more intelligently, invite them more naturally (e.g. to meals, events, services, groups, etc.), serve them more effectively, give resources to them more relevantly, and communicate the gospel with them more meaningfully.
 - a. I draw those five categories again from Merida's article and I encourage you to consider them. All of these are ways we can begin ministering as missionaries to the people God's calling us to. We can pray, we can invite, we can serve, we can give resources, and we can communicate.

Step #3: Courage

- A. So you've got five categories of relationships and five activities you could engage. Now, I'm sure you could spin off all sorts of ideas as you pray and brainstorm. But these last two steps are actually the hardest.

- B. First it's Courage. Here is where being on mission really starts to cost us—our time, our reputation, our money, etc. We are present with people, praying for and open to opportunities, and then we lean into God for courage to actually go and do as he leads. It's not just dreaming anymore. It's doing. And that takes Courage.

Step #4: Time

- A. But it also takes Time.

1. And with this I just mean, sometimes we like to imagine evangelism and conversion it's like this straight line, just a move from A to B. We get to know a person, we invite them to church or share the gospel with them and then poof they're born again.

a. And this does happen, but Damascus road conversions are rare in my experience.

2. Most of the time, the whole process doesn't move so much like a line as much as like a circle. You just go around and around and around with a person in love and over time, sometimes indiscernibly, things start to shift, barriers start to fall, questions start to get answered or aren't as troubling to them anymore.

a. As you persevere—as you keep praying and inviting and serving and resourcing and communicating the gospel—as you keep going around in circles with a person in love for them . . . you get somewhere. That's the idea. Don't give up.

- B. Presence, Awareness, Courage, and Time!

(4) The When (+ How)

Mission Impossible?

- A. And I know at this point, some of us are feeling perhaps a little discouraged, or overwhelmed, or insufficient for all this. We just look at what we're being called to and think I don't have it in me to do this. I get too selfish, too scared, too whatever it may be. This really does feel like Mission Impossible, right?

1. If that's you, hold on a minute, because there's fresh encouragement here as we start to consider the When, which as I said will really squish together with the How.

a. What I mean is: when Jesus calls us to do this, gives us clues into how we are to do it as well.

- B. Look at [v. 49](#) now: “[And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.](#)”

1. Did you catch that? Jesus is saying: “This gospel has to get out. It's got to go not just to Jerusalem, but to the nations!”

- a. And we'd be thinking to this point, therefore, we better get moving. We've got a lot to do. "What are you standing around here for? Get out there!"
 - b. But that's not what Jesus says at all, is it? He says: "There's so much to do and we've got to go so far with this, therefore, don't go anywhere, stay in the city, and wait . . . for the Holy Spirit of God."

- C. At first it's an affront and an offense to us, right? But then at last it's truly freeing.
 - 1. It's an affront and an offense because I don't like to be told I don't have the resources for something, that I need help from outside. I can do whatever I put my mind to.
 - 2. But it's freeing, because I really don't have the resources for this, and I really do need help from outside, and he really is ready to supply what I am lacking in the Spirit.

- D. Don't you see? When he says this it means he knows you're going to struggle with this mission at times. He knows that courage is hard to come by.
 - 1. He watched what happened with Peter and that little servant girl. He looked him in the eye as the very one who had said he'd never deny his Lord ended up denying three times that he'd ever even known him.
 - a. Jesus knows what's in you. He doesn't expect this to come from you. He's here to help. That's why he sends the Holy Spirit. That's why he says wait until the Spirit falls. And the same principle applies to us. We can't do this in ourselves. We're not sufficient for the task.

- E. I thought of Paul when he's considering his own gospel ministry and in [2 Cor. 2:16](#), he just cries out: "[Who is sufficient for these things?](#)" You ever felt that way? I have.
 - 1. And then he comes down in [3:5-6](#) and answers his own question: "⁵ [\[W\]e are \[not\] sufficient in ourselves to claim anything as coming from us, but our sufficiency is from God,](#) ⁶ [who has made us sufficient to be ministers of a new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit.](#)"
 - a. You don't have it in you, that's true. But he's here to help!

- F. So there's your mission. The What, the Who, the Where, the When, and the How.
 - 1. The question we have to end with again, then, this morning is: so will you accept it? I hope you will!