

Profile of a Missionary

October 28th, 2012

Luke 9:1-9

"¹And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, "Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them." ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere."

This passage is a missionary passage; it's about Jesus sending the twelve apostles out as His authoritative representatives. There's a lot here that deserves careful consideration as we think about our ongoing mission, and I'm going to point you to six principles, and then come back to one and linger there for awhile, because of some things going on around us this week that seem to demand a little extra attention.

Who is Sent?

The first question: who is sent? And the answer of this text is in verse 1: "¹And he called the twelve together...²and he sent them out..." These particular twelve had a unique role to play in the spread of Jesus' mission, but the mission did not end with these twelve. Jesus is still sending people. We see that in Matthew 28, and Acts 8 and 1 Peter 2, and plenty of other places in the New Testament. If you're a Christian, you are a sent one.

God has a higher vision for your Christianity than simply coming to events and receiving things, and learning. The plan -- as we see here modeled with the twelve apostles -- is that someone who gets becomes someone who gives, that you move from being a consumer of Christian ministry to a carrier of it.

What are we Sent to Do?

Second, if this mission is yours to own, what is it? What are we sent to do? "¹And he called the twelve together...²and he sent them out *to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.*" The mission we're given is twofold: it's a message (an announcement) to be heralded, as well as works that demonstrate the authenticity of that message. The mission involves both word and deed.

"Preach the gospel always, and if necessary, use words," is a misnomer. The gospel is a message to be proclaimed with words. Jesus doesn't say, "Preach the Kingdom of God, and if necessary use words," as if the ministry of compassionate healing was a substitute for proclaiming the message. He says, proclaim *and* heal. That healing might not be miraculous today, but they are still good deeds of service and love and kindness and mercy that demonstrate the goodness and beauty of God's reign when it breaks into a person's life: "¹⁶Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven."

When are we Sent?

Third, when are we sent? The short answer is: sooner than you think. These twelve weren't exactly the sharpest tools in the shed. They were not astounding pillars of faith. We have observed in chapter 8, haven't we? On the boat they doubted Jesus' care and power. They still seem to be unsure about who He is. When the woman with the hemorrhage reached out and touched Jesus, Peter acted like Jesus was an idiot for asking who touched Him. They don't seem ready for this assignment, do they?

Yes, Jesus had spent time teaching and modeling and equipping them for the mission. But they are a sea of doubt, misunderstanding and confusion. They don't have it all together, right? But Jesus says, "It's time. Go out and spread the good news of the Kingdom." So as you think about being a missionary of King Jesus, please don't wait until

you feel ready. If you wait until you feel ready, you'll never go. Sometimes we're always looking for that next Bible study, that next book, that will put us over the edge. And I'm all for training, but sometimes we need to stop studying the playbook, and get out there and run some plays, do you know what I mean?

Where are we Sent to?

After Jesus gave them their instructions: "⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing *everywhere*." Being a missionary isn't just recruiting people to come and hear me or Jason. There are millions of people in this country who want nothing to do with a church building. They're not coming, so we need to go out and tell, and go out everywhere: at jobs, in neighborhoods, in the bleachers, at fitness clubs, in line at grocery stores, around dinner tables, in restaurants, in hospitals and doctors' offices. They preached the gospel *everywhere*. Evangelism wasn't an event that they invited people to; it was a lifestyle of listening to others and commending Jesus. It's who they were. Prick them, and they bled good news. Is that how you see life?

And as we think about everywhere, I would be remiss if I didn't mention those who have never heard. According to the Joshua Project, there are 16,448 people groups in the world. 7,082 of them (43%) are unreached. Jesus calls us to go reach them, to make disciples of all nations (ie, people groups). Is He calling some of you to go where the name of Jesus is not known? You sit here in faith only because some came to us.

Why are We Sent?

To provoke a response to Jesus. "⁷Now Herod the tetrarch heard about all that was happening, and he was perplexed...⁹John I beheaded, but who is this about whom I hear such things?" And he sought to see

him." Their lives, and their message, had a ripple effect that reached Herod, and he wanted to know what was up with this Man, Jesus.

We're not to consume ourselves with what that response is. Jesus prepares us for both positive and negative response (v.4-5). In some places we'll be received, in other places, we'll be rejected. To some we will be the aroma of life, to others the stench of death. We're simply called to be faithful, to make God known by our words and by our lives. You have life and breath not to call attention to yourself, but to call attention to greatness of our King and Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ. Are we living in such a way that our lives provoke in people the question, "Who is this Jesus?"

How are we Sent?

We're sent in dependence on God's provision and care. The apostles are sent with the bare necessities of life, that they might learn through experience that Jesus is faithful to care for their needs (cf. 22:35). But it's not just physical provision that they get: "¹And he called the twelve together and *gave them power and authority* over all demons and to cure diseases." Praise God we're not left to ourselves to carry out this mission!

Living as a witness, a missionary, is hard, painful, wearying. It will expose selfishness and fear and greed and impatience. But you have divine power for this mission: "⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Proclaim *the Kingdom*

Now I said that I would return to dig into one of these points in more detail, because there were some things going on around us that

necessitated some extra attention. And the things going on that I have in mind are two: Autumn Pasquale and Hurricane Sandy. And the truth from this text that I have in mind is the commission to go and proclaim the *Kingdom of God*. Notice the way the apostles give heed to that commission: "⁶And they departed and went through the villages, *preaching the gospel* and healing everywhere."

If I were to ask you what things come to mind when you hear the word "gospel", I bet many of you would never think of, "The Kingdom of God." And yet this was a *huge* component of Jesus ministry and mission (cf. 4:43, 8:1, Mark 1:15). And many of us don't have the faintest idea what it is! And it has everything to do with Autumn Pasquale and Hurricane Sandy, and every other wretched thing in this world that makes believer and unbeliever alike cry out, "What is wrong with this world?!"

This is a vast subject to get into, but let's start with Mark 1: "¹⁵The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand..." What time? It sounds like Jesus sees Himself as the fulfillment of something that God's people had been anticipating and hoping for. We see this here in Luke as well: "³²He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High. And the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, ³³and he will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of his kingdom there will be no end."

Paradise Lost

To understand what Jesus, and Gabriel, are talking about, we have to go back to the beginning of God's story. The story begins with the Triune God -- Father, Son and Holy Spirit, existing eternally in an unfathomably beautiful relationship of love, delight and glorious joy -- out of the overflow of His own perfections creating everything that is. And it was all good, *very* good. Eden -- before the Fall -- is full of *shalom*, the Hebrew word for peace, meaning the webbing together of

God, humans and the creation into a tapestry of perfect justice, fulfillment and delight, "the way things ought to be".

But it doesn't last long. Adam and Eve eat the fruit that God had forbidden. But it is about much more than a piece of fruit; it is an act of treason. It is a vote of "No confidence" to God's rule over them, an attempt to overthrow Him as Lord of all, a declaration of independence from God, a choice for self-rule over humble submission to God's rule, deciding for themselves what is right and wrong for them, rather than trusting, relying and depending on God for every good thing.

The result is horrifying: this perfect webbing together of God, humans and the creation begins to unravel as the entire creation becomes "subjected to futility." Where once there had been no suffering or pain or death, now every human dies, every human suffers innumerable pain and hardships before death: rivers overflow and sweep villages away, hurricanes destroy whole cities, tsunamis kills 250,000 people in one night, AIDS, cancer and heart disease kill millions of people old and young, droughts and famines bring millions to the point of starvation, and innocent girls are murdered and thrown away for bike parts. And it all flows from man's arrogant yearning to be independent of God.

Hope of Redemption

Despite the bondage to corruption we see and experience, hope is not lost. As God pronounced the curse over all creation, He held out the hope of redemption, promising that an offspring of Eve would crush the serpent and undo all that had gone wrong in the world. As time unfolded, it became clear that this Redeemer would be a son of David who would rule over an eternal kingdom of peace and righteousness:

"⁶For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. ⁷Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David

and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore." (Do you hear Gabriel's words there?)

There would be a return to the way things ought to be: the deserts would flower, the mountains would run with wine, weeping would cease, and kids could go to school without passing through metal detectors. People would work in peace and work to fruitful effect. Lambs could lie down with lions. All nature would be fruitful, benign, and filled with wonder upon wonder; all humans would be knit together in brotherhood and sisterhood, and all nature and all humans would look to God, walk with God, lean toward God and delight in God.

The long-awaited King has come to purge the world of rebellion and evil, to establish His eternal reign. As Jesus said, "⁴¹The Son of Man will send his angels, and they will gather out of his kingdom all causes of sin and all law-breakers, ⁴²and throw them into the fiery furnace. In that place there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

But there's a problem; a *big* problem! The Kingdom which has come near in Jesus is the rule of God in which He puts all His enemies under His feet. The problem is that *you're* one of God's enemies! Because you and I and every human being have repeated the same wickedness as Adam and Eve did in the Garden, preferring other things to God Himself and wanting to rule our own lives instead of surrender to His benevolent rule over us, we have all made ourselves enemies of God, hostile to Him and objects of His wrath. So the news that the Kingdom has come is *not* good news for us!

The Cross and the Kingdom

But at the heart of the New Testament, and of Christ's mission, is the accomplishment of *redemption* (that is, freedom from bondage). Jesus has come not only to put all of God's enemies under His feet, but to transform enemies into friends. And so as Jesus' life continues, He

begins to speak more and more of His death: "²²The Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and on the third day be raised.'" Why would this King need to suffer?

Cosmic liberation cannot come apart from the curse for sin being broken, because as the curse of futility on God's creation was the consequence of man's rebellion against God, so the liberation of the creation can only come through the reconciliation of God and man. Someone needed to perfectly live a life free from the effects of the curse and then absorb in Himself the punishment of the curse.

That is what He did on the cross, accomplishing redemption decisively for all who believe by paying the price for our rebellion in His own crucified flesh: "¹³Christ *redeemed* us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us." When He died, Jesus bore in His own body the cosmic effects of the curse, in order that He might reconcile all things to Himself: "¹⁹For in him all the fullness of God was pleased to dwell, ²⁰and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether on earth or in heaven, making peace by the blood of his cross."

But Jesus' story did not end in death, because on the third day Jesus put death to death by rising triumphant from the grave! And now the risen Christ, reigning at the right hand of God, is the firstfruits of the coming resurrection that will eventually heal the whole world, upon His return: "⁴He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." ⁵And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new."

For all who will repent of their treason and cast themselves upon Christ for His mercy, Christ's death counts as their punishment and His obedience counts as their righteousness. Why does Jesus wait? Why is the Kingdom not here (in full) now? Jesus is patient, giving all people

time to repent, lest they be swept up in the coming day of vengeance, to experience the Lord's favor instead of His awful vengeance.

Let Your Kingdom Come!

This is the gospel of the Kingdom. If you have not entered, do not delay! Turn from your sin, place your hands in the ever-faithful, reliable hands that were nailed to the cross for your rebellion and sin, and today you can experience the firstfruits of the joy of being a citizen in God's eternal Kingdom, where all of our groanings will one day seem light and momentary in view of the eternal weight of glory that is ours through Christ.

For those who are citizens, it's your calling and privilege to herald this good news. There is amnesty from the wages of sin, there is rescue from the domain of darkness and access to the Kingdom of the beloved Son. Who knows what terror and heartache the next week might bring? Yet we have good news of hope to proclaim, like the apostles, everywhere we go. Our hope is not politicians, education, better law enforcement, or any other early fix. Our hope is King Jesus. "Let Your Kingdom Come" is not just a prayer, but should shape a lifestyle committed to proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom.