

"CHRIST'S MISSION STATEMENT"

(Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8)

1.3.21

INTRODUCTION

What is a "mission statement?" Businesses of various kinds talk about them all the time, and often promote them in trying to sell themselves to the public. But what exactly is a mission statement? What does it mean to have one? That's what we're going to be talking about this morning - but not just about any mission statement, but the one Jesus Himself gave to His church. But before we begin, **let's start with a moment of prayer.**

TEXT AND ANALYSIS

OK, so back to our opening question: What is a mission statement? A mission statement is a formal summary of the aims and values of a company, organization, or individual. It is a short statement of why an organization exists and what its overall goal is. Its intention? To communicate the organization's purpose and direction both to those inside and outside the organization, and to create a sense of identity for those who are part of the organization. So now let's bring in our text:

This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.... [Y]ou will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth" - Jesus Christ, Luke 24:46-48; Acts 1:8.

We often attach great importance to the idea of somebody's "last words," particularly end-of-life last words, that, in human circumstances, if the person senses death is near, their final utterances are especially significant. Well, obviously Jesus has by His resurrection conquered death so that doesn't apply here. But He is about to return to His home in heaven, so these are last words in the sense of no longer being physically available to these men who have lived with Him for the last three years. His departure is imminent; in fact, His statement in Acts is considered the final words He ever shared with His disciples. So, piece by piece, let's see what Jesus is saying with His final words:

- 1) ***This is what is written*** - This references the OT, all the Scriptures that had preceded Jesus but had been written about him. What Christ is saying here is that, for the Messiah to be the Messiah, the events these prophecies promised absolutely had to happen - and, of course, they did.
- 2) ***He will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day*** - When Christ first appeared to them, coming into their midst in a locked room, He had shown them evidence of His suffering - the nail marks in His hands and feet, and the gash left by the spear in His side. And by His simply being there in the room with them, inviting them, as He said, to ***"[t]ouch Me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have"*** - ***Jesus Christ, Luke 24:39b***, they had proof positive that Jesus did indeed "rise from the dead on the third day."
- 3) On the basis of both what had been predicted of the Messiah and what Jesus had done in claiming to be the Messiah, the outcome of ***repentance for the forgiveness of sins in [Jesus'] name*** could now be preached, because ***repentance for the forgiveness of sins*** had now been secured in the name of Jesus. Why? Because Jesus had proven Himself to

truly be the Messiah, thus having all the power necessary to forgive all sins.

- 4) And finally, as Jesus reminded them: ***You are witnesses of these things.*** He wasn't commanding them to become great scriptural scholars or even great orators. He was simply telling them to tell everybody they came in contact with the simplest of things: what they had seen, what they had experienced, what they had witnessed with their own eyes. It's very reminiscent of what John had written in his first letter: ***That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked at and our hands have touched [in other words, what we have witnessed] - this we proclaim concerning the Word of life. The life appeared; we have seen it and testify to it, and we proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and has appeared to us. We proclaim to you what we have seen and heard - I John 1:1-3a.*** Just tell people your honest experience with Jesus of Nazareth. No myths, no exaggerations, no legends, no hearsay. Just the truth of your witness. That's all.

And now, in Jesus' final words in Acts 1, comes the parameters of the mission He wants His followers to undertake - but starting with an amazing promise of divine help as they set out to accomplish the task He has laid before them:

- 1) ***You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you*** - What an awesome assurance Jesus was giving them. They wouldn't be doing their Lord's work in their own power, but they would receive guaranteed, divine power. What did that mean? That, as the writer of the book of Hebrews said, God would be ***equip[ping] [us] with everything good for doing His will, work[ing] in us what is pleasing to Him - Hebrews 13:21a,*** regarding:
 - a) What to say:
 - i) ***"[D]o not worry about what to say or how to say it. At that time you will be given what to say, for it will not be you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you" - Jesus Christ, Matthew 10:19-20.***
 - ii) ***"[T]he Advocate, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you" - Jesus Christ, John 14:26.***
 - b) What to do: ***"[M]ake disciples of all nations,***
 - i) ***baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and***
 - ii) ***teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you" - Jesus Christ, Matthew 28:19-20a.***
 - c) Finding His strength:
 - i) ***I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me - Paul, Philippians 4:13 (NKJV).***
 - ii) ***It is God who arms me with strength and keeps my way secure. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer; He causes me to stand on the heights. You make your saving help my shield, and Your right hand sustains me; Your help has made me great. You provide a broad path for my feet, so that my ankles do not give way - David, Psalm 18:32-33, 35-36.***
 - d) The unfailing accompaniment of the Holy Spirit:
 - i) ***Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; may Your good Spirit lead me on level ground - David, Psalm 143:10.***
 - ii) ***"[T]he Father... will give you another advocate to help you and be with you***

forever" - Jesus Christ, John 14:16.

- 2) Next, the purpose for which we are receiving that power: *[Y]ou will be my witnesses - Jesus Christ.* This means that Jesus is to be the focus of our conversations. Jesus is to be what our lives reflect. Our attitudes and actions should all align to present one truth: Jesus Christ is Lord.
- 3) Where will we, witnesses of the Lord? *[I]n Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.* In our language today, we might express this as being Christ's witnesses in our city (including our own church), our state, and our country. And, in the final analysis, the ultimate end game is the same - the entire world. Whether phrased in Matthew and Luke as all nations, in Mark as all the world, or by Luke in the book of Acts as the ends of the earth, the point is the same: Take Jesus everywhere, to everyone. Go to all, preach to everyone! Now, this might not mean that I personally go to the ends of the earth, but maybe somebody I have influenced through my teaching realizes God's call to go overseas, or maybe serve in a very marginalized, resource-poor environment like Appalachia or some major city's inner city. God's Word needs to be presented everywhere because God's salvation is needed everywhere.

APPLICATION

It is Christ's mission statement that is to define us - including the forms we are using for ministry. Let's look at them now:

- 1) Our "community ministry" sheet is intended for ministry outside our walls - meaning in the community. Pray that God will open our eyes to see where ministry is needed - in our neighborhood, in our town, in our county - that could meet people where they are with people who are not only ready to share the gospel but, by their lives, show the gospel as well.
- 2) Our "ministry volunteer" sheet is specifically about ministry within our walls. We have a number of ministries going on with our church family: tech teams (soundboard and computer), music teams, nursery, Sunday School teachers, kitchen ministries - all kinds of things. Connecting by means of this sheet will allow our church family to find even more blessing from the skills, interests and abilities that exist in our church body.
- 3) Our "prayer net" is incredibly important. One of the most consistent themes of Scripture is praying for one another. The prayer net allows us to specifically remember somebody in our church - whether family or couple or individual - throughout the entire coming year. If we wind up drawing somebody to pray for that we don't know that well, we now have the additional opportunity of new fellowship and relationship. And we get to move through the New Year knowing that somebody in our church family is praying for us. It's a great way to get through the year.

But all of this has the same common purpose - to reflect Christ, to live out our faith in a way that people can see and begin to see the reality of Jesus Christ in our lives. Remember when Jesus said: *"You are the light of the world. A town built on a hill cannot be hidden. Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead, they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. In the same way, let your light shine before others, that they may see your good deeds and glorify your Father in heaven" - Jesus Christ, the Sermon on the Mount, Matthew 5:14-16.* Jesus is the life-changing light to which He was referring that people, by watching us, may be pointed to the Savior who has changed us - and can change them as well.

CONCLUSION

Why are we here? I mean, when our lives were surrendered to God through Jesus Christ, why didn't He just take us home to heaven so that we could start eternity with Him right away? One verse from Paul tells us why, from his letter to the church at Ephesus: ***For we are [God's] workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand so that we would walk in them - Paul, Ephesians 2:10 (NASB2020).***

What Paul is saying is that God created us who we are and how we are - and even that we are - for His plans and purposes. The final piece of that "work" was a life surrendered to Him. Once our lives have been given to Christ, we are now to live for Christ - all our gifts and talents and abilities now supernaturally empowered by God Himself through His Holy Spirit. We have the awesome privilege of being the hands and the feet of Jesus. Think about that - the hands and feet of Jesus Christ. Wow! Folks, for a Christian, it just doesn't get any better than that. And yet there is even more - not just the hands and feet but also the emotions and attitudes we present throughout the day as we interact with people and with circumstances. There are difficult people in the world, and sometimes some of the most difficult people are with us - in church. I've even heard people ask: Why did God bring that person here? The fact is, one of the purposes of the family of God is to have the opportunity to practice forgiveness and reconciliation with each other - including the difficult ones. Why? Because that's the whole purpose of why Christ came - that we might have forgiveness of sins and be reconciled in our relationship with God, His Father. We are to mirror His purpose with our lives. That's why we do sermons and Bible studies and devotionals and all that, that with every day we might, as Peter said, [G]row in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ - II Peter 3:18. As long as we are here, God has plans and purpose for us here. Our being here matters for the Kingdom!

And no matter what the outcome of the virus may be - whether short-term or ongoing, no matter the restrictions - Christ's mission statement doesn't change. No matter what political party may be sitting in the White House or controlling Congress - Christ's mission statement doesn't change. Nothing will ever change the mission we have to perform for the Kingdom.

I know that there's a lot of "noise" in the world, whether it be about COVID or the elections or social justice or whatever. But that noise is going to do one of two things: either give Satan the opportunity to distract us from Christ's mission statement, or underscore how necessary fulfilling Christ's mission statement truly is. BOTTOM LINE: "People need the Lord." We have a choice as to how we react to the world's noise! Hint: God can make a louder noise than the world will ever be able to make!

So now we begin traveling through another year. What lies ahead? Literally, only God knows. But there is a clock, an eternal clock, that is ticking, that is counting down to the end of the church's life on earth. A huge majority of commentators and Bible teachers feel that the Rapture, the church of Christ leaving this world at the trumpet call of heaven, is imminent. I humbly happen to agree. Prophetically, nothing remains to be fulfilled. Each day brings us closer. What does that mean? Time is short - so let us constantly be looking for where God would be directing His Son's hands and feet - through us. For as long as we're here, that's what we're here for. So, as we leave this place, remember that each and every one of us are leaving as missionaries - presenting in every environment (workplace, home, neighborhood) in every way possible the truth of the gospel, the love of God, and all He provides in the person of His Son. Let's pray!