

Summer 2006 - King's Centre Church, Sheffield

Mission Possible – The Greatest Commandment and the Great Commission (14.06.06)

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Today's readings – Great Commandment & Great Commission

Matt 28:16-20

"Then the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had told them to go. When they saw him, they worshiped him; but some doubted. Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Matt 22:34-40

Hearing that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, the Pharisees got together. One of them, an expert in the law, tested him with this question: "Teacher, which is the greatest commandment in the Law?" Jesus replied: " 'Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind.' This is the first and greatest commandment. And the second is like it: 'Love your neighbour as yourself.' All the Law and the Prophets hang on these two commandments."

INTRODUCTION

- My first Sunday back after Easter – setting the course for the next season of the church until Autumn. So far – Discipleship, Kingdom, Spiritual disciplines
- Quite theoretical – Summer season is a great time to engage with living Xian life in the real world. People come out more! More chill-out time. Even work can ease off a bit in the hot summer months.
- Theme word for me = engage
- Engage with
 - Others – OUT
 - Weaving the basics, the foundations, into everyday life – UP, IN, OUT
- Today – Remind ourselves of the OUTWARD dimension of the Christian life
 - Speak about 'Mission' – but unpack that word too

Story – told by Marjorie's Grandfather

M's granddad was a missionary in India for a while, and know of a man who went to the northern tribes and lived amongst them, preaching the gospel. He saw very little visible fruit during that time, and eventually died out there.

Another missionary came some time later to the same villages, with the same task to share the gospel with the Indian folk. As he started telling the villagers about Jesus, and the things he did during his life, suddenly they got very excited. They said to the missionary "We know this man! He used to live with us in this village!"

As the dust settled, the missionary realised that they were referring to the previous missionary man, who came and lived with the Indians – and obviously loved them too. What they saw in that man, they equated with the stories of his saviour Jesus.

As a result, lots of the Indians became Christians, because they saw the testimony of this man's life.

- Fruit – the second missionary had a harvest of converts, bc of the love & devotion sown by the first man
- That's the kind of story that I would like someone to tell about me, one day!
- And it's a challenge to me to today, and for us all I think

Point = whole life discipleship

As a missionary (in this case, overseas) this man understood that we are called by God to live our whole lives as missionaries – in what we say, do, how we act, don't act.

- And whole life means more than just evangelism – it means loving people, sometimes to the point that it costs us personally
- He understood that God's mission to this world is about love, and about making a practical difference to the world
 - Sowing seeds of justice, hope, peace
 - And the next missionary, a generation later, saw a harvest of souls too

We can change the world

This is a topic that I am passionate about. I'm passionate because I know that if the Church (whole world – people of God) really grasped and lived out the teachings of Jesus – like he commands us to do in Matthew 28 – and all the implications of Jesus' teachings and if we move in his power - then we really can change the world into a much better place!

If the people of God were *really passionate* after the things of God's heart – fighting injustice, feeding the hungry, welcoming in the outcast, sharing the good news of Jesus through the power of miracles and prophetic leading.....

- Then imagine how different the modern world could be!
- Imagine how different the estates of Sheffield could be
- Imagine how different the lives of your neighbours could be

I have to be honest that this is something which God is speaking to me directly about too at the moment. My present job & much of my time IN focussed to the church (which I love too), but it leaves me frustrated – holy discontent – about not having enough of an OUT dimension. Frustration = not living holistic mission

I feel that for King's Centre we are entering a season for evangelism, prophetic evangelism (power etc) season –BUT I don't want to give you the impression that its just about evangelism

POWERPOINT – What is God doing?

Its God's mission first of all! (mission dei)

Our God is a missionary! When we talk about 'mission' - its HIS MISSION – he started it, and he's gonna finish it – we just join in

God reaches out:

- Genesis – humans created out of love, intended for relationship and perfect union with our creator
- Post-fall = God takes the initiative again to repair the damage – COVENANT (with Abraham - first of several, culminating in the new Covenant thru Jesus)
 - The Covenant was first with one family – who were not to exist for themselves – but thru them “all nations on earth will be blessed” (Gen 22:18)
- Salvation – as God reaches into the lives of humans to save
 - Exodus & Nation of Israel thru-out their history of wars & oppression
- Jesus – the ultimate act of salvation & redemption
 - Jesus is still reaching out today to save

God is a missionary! All three members of the Trinity are missionaries. Its always God's mission and His activity, and we are privileged to be called into it, and given roles within it.

Rowan Williams *definition of mission* – “*Finding out what God’s doing and joining in*”

Mission isn’t just evangelism

God is always reaching out – and **always sending** us – that’s what discipleship is all about!

STORY – Nick’s call to Netherthorpe

- Year of FORM – first time I’d really tried to live a life of discipleship *all the time*
 - During FORM, I served a struggling inner-city parish ch in an unfashionable estate called Netherthorpe
 - End of yr – feel God calling me to move there!
 - It was v hard for me – cos the same week I decided in my heart to go, I got an offer from my 2 closed friends to share a house with them – right in the middle of Crookes – and basically be the centre of the young adult community that we so strong!
 - I thought “well, that’s just typical”
 - ACTUALLY YES! Sometimes, that is typical of God
 - It’s His agenda, not ours. Sometimes he’ll call us to make sacrifices and GO
 - The fruit of being obedient was marvellous – and not what I was expecting!
 - Personally disciplined by a godly & inspiring couple
 - Saw the church grow
 - Saw us reach the community – partic the children
 - Saw the HS & worship grow
 - Learned about missionary living
 - Even got engaged while I was living there!

We are all supposed to join in, with both feet, with God’s mission to this wonderful world.

- Mission wasn’t ever intended to be something you did once a term, or once a year
 - Not intended to be something that only happens overseas,
 - Or something done by ‘professional’ missionaries who are paid to go off and ‘do mission
- **Mission is God’s task 24/7, and is our task 24/7 – when-ever, where-ever**
- And YOU are a missionary too – in everyday life, whatever your situation this morning
- Every Christian is ‘sent’ by God – every Christian has the HS available to empower them. In ordinary lives and works.
 - Up to God where he chooses to place his workers (not the other way around).
 - If you are following God’s call in a comfortable environment - then serve him there will all your might. And be ready, cos he might ask you next month to move to Guatemala!

ENCOURAGEMENT

Some people here are trying genuinely to follow god in your situations – and to share the good news with people when you get a chance. You don’t have to feel guilty! You’re not failing! You are living out the Great Commission and the Great Commandment

God is concerned with a lot more than personal salvation:

But when I talk of mission, I don't just mean evangelism. Sometimes we think that God's agenda is just about personal salvation. Not just 'life after death' salvation

- God's heart for: (all part of the Now & Not yet Kingdom)
 - Justice
 - Peace
 - Unity (Jesus prayed)
 - The Poor
 - In every age, and biblically – God is on the side of the poor (bc of his heart for justice & righteousness).
 - Therefore, the church should actively seek justice, equality & sacrificial love on behalf of the poor too
 - Hope
 - Righteous living in the now
 - Breaking down man-made social boundaries & distinctions
 - There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus. (Gal 3:28)
 - Freedom (from Exodus to Jesus – the same theme)
 - Redemption theme
 - Restoring & putting right whole cultures, communities, business, the whole context! (not just individual people)
- Life to the full, in the NOW (Jesus)

God's mission does involve reaching out to all people with the good news – evangelism. But the good news doesn't stop there, because there is more good news! There is salvation, there is hope, there is justice for the oppressed, there is life to the full!

SO..... evangelism and social action (while being distinct) are both vitally important to the total mission of the church.

POWERPOINT – Ven diagram of both evangelism and social action interlocking

SO – IT'S THE GREAT COMMISSION WITH THE GREATEST COMMANDMENT

- Great Commission = preach the gospel (evangelise) *and* teach to obey Christ's commandments – many of which have strong social implications
- Greatest Commandment = love our neighbour – which means caring about his social needs, as well as spiritual.
 - And if you are modelling Jesus – you are doing it out of sacrificial love

Bb careful: Evangelical churches danger is that they stress primary task of Church as evangelism, at expense of neglecting social & political issues, and the poor. Making a positive impact for God's programme (his mission) involves our whole-life. Its whole life discipleship.

STORY – Brazil rubbish dump

- Visited Brazil – to a small Anglican church meeting in a concrete single-story church
 - Other side of the road – city's enormous rubbish dump, where people made a few pesos a day in recycling – to survive
- The lady who leads the church isn't afraid to preach 'blessed are the poor' – to her neighbours who are desperately poor
 - That church embodies that message – they embody the mission of God
 - Dentist chair in one room

- Mums & tods, Youth clubs
- Food & supplies for the poorest
- Love – time and love for the lowest members of Brazilian society
- Similar story all over the world

You don't have to be a hero

Early disciples took the message OUT (the streets, markets, lecture halls, temples of other gods) but Matt 28:17 = 'When they saw him they worshiped him, even though some doubted.'

- Take heart from this

People with perhaps as much doubt as faith – but willing to take the gospel of Jesus OUT – not to conquer people 'onward Xian soldiers' but relying on the power of HS (given soon at Pentecost)

- Early disciples had a) great commitment to Christ, b) great vulnerability – thus openness to the HS

Our role?

The church is God's primary chosen agent for the world's redemption.

- Therefore, what we do as church, should be an expression of the mission of God (and not just being an institution for the sake of it, or doing IN things for ourselves all the time)
 - Is it?
 - Do we (KC) have a concern for the poor, for the marginalised?
 - Do we seek to promote justice and fight injustice?
 - Do we share the good news of the gospel of peace?
 - Do we feed the hungry, clothe the naked, visit those in prison etc
- **There is likely to be a cost to engaging in God's mission**
- J calls us to take up our cross – jump in with both feet, regardless of the consequences
- 1 Cor 9:19 – "Though I am free and belong to no man, I make myself a slave to everyone, to win as many as possible." (Paul)

Summary

Great Commission – 'GO OUT' (take the message out)

- Interesting – its not 'come in to the church' – its 'go out to the world'

QUESTION? If a definition of mission is "Finding out what God's doing and joining in"

- Then what are you seeing God doing in & around your life?
- Where is he prompting you?
- What's he put in your heart?
- What opportunities are *already there for you to take* – at work etc

Great Commission – MAKE DISCIPLES

Engaging with the 'real people' around us, teaching them to obey everything Jesus commanded.

QUESTION? Are you making disciples (of non-xians too, even if they don't realise it)?

Great Commission – I WILL BE WITH YOU ALWAYS

QUESTION? – Are you trying to operate in your own strength, or God's?

Great Commandment – LOVE GOD WITH EVERYTHING, LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR

QUESTION? – As you seek to reach people, are you just bashing people over the head with the gospel, or are you loving them too?

END

We prayed for the empowering & presence of HS