

## Sunday 17 February 2008 Sermon - King's Centre Christian Church, Sheffield, UK

### **Sermon Series: Being a Missionary People Title: Jesus as a missionary – Wide & Weak By Nick Allan**

#### Intro

Inspired by what Anne taught us last week about Jesus' own simple but sold-out approach to being a missionary, looking again this week at how Jesus lived. Cos Jesus was a missionary too. In fact, he still is! We know that mission is first of all God the Trinity's mission. Father, Son and Holy Spirit are a sending God, a giving God, a going God, a reaching out God, a missionary God.

This series is perhaps less about specifically *telling you what to do*, so much as setting a framework, a context, for us all to operate from. We're building up the foundations – from the introduction in week 1, prayer & unity, letting God go ahead of us so we can see & know stuff He is doing right in front of our eyes. Last week, Anne = opportunity & availability – Jesus & the Samaritan woman at the well.

In time, I expect we'll get on to some big questions like 'what is church' – I'd encourage you to process this yourselves over Sunday lunch, in your small groups. **As I'm called to be a missionary person, what does this mean in my life, lifestyle, the way my life is set-up?**

So today we're looking again at how Jesus lived as a person, and what his ministry was like – as pointers for how we to can be a missionary people. After all, Jesus is to be our mentor, our life-coach, so let's learn from him.

#### The New Testament is a missionary document

Obviously, what we know about Jesus' time on earth is to be found in the bible. As you read the bible, you need to understand that it's a missionary document. Because it deals with God's expression, his incarnation, on earth in the person of Jesus. **The New Testament in particular is a missionary document.**

The NT books aren't just written for fun. Or as a detached account of a historical period in the life of the middle east. They are a living reaction to the most awesome event ever to hit planet earth. The creator of the universe has come to earth – and is expressed in the person and works of Jesus Christ. So the books are written by people rolling from the experience, trying to get their heads around what just happened. They are raw and fresh, honest and radical. And their reason for being is missional. A new religion was forming out of new relationship with God – and the mission of God was at the heart of everything. Not an optional extra. Not 'something we do' as Christians alongside everything else. Mission is at the heart of God and its all encompassing. So it is in the New Testament too. And so it is to be in how we live and express our lives as God's followers today.. **We are all missionaries.**

#### Example of Jesus

**The mission of the church is rooted in God's revelation in Jesus.**

What we do as church (worldwide) is rooted in who Jesus was, what He did, and how he was a missionary.

There are 2 features of Jesus' ministry and mission that I want to pick out today:

- wide
- weak

## Wide (widespread)

Jesus' missionary approach was very wide, very inclusive. Not narrow, not exclusive. He didn't pick the best-lookers, the obvious candidates to hear his message. He didn't hold back from introducing the kingdom of God to anyone who would accept it.

“What amazes one again and again is the *inclusiveness* of Jesus' mission. It embraces both the poor and the rich, both the oppressed and the oppressor, both the sinners and the devout. His mission is one of dissolving alienation and breaking down walls of hostility, of crossing boundaries between individuals and groups.”<sup>1</sup>

As a missionary, Jesus' scope is extremely wide.

Here are some of the things Jesus said in the final days before his crucifixion & resurrection:

- “But I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will **draw all men** to myself.” (John 12:32)
- “I have **come into the world as a light**, so that no one who believes in me should stay in darkness.” (John 12:46)
  - Light is very hard to keep in one place! It spreads out, it fills every available space, it beats darkness away.
  - When you open the crack in the curtains in the morning, it isn't just one corner of the room that becomes light, one small area – the whole place lights up. Everything in its path is changed.
  - Jesus used this image very deliberately to describe his mission – all encompassing, deep & wide.
  - He demonstrated the kingdom of God piercing the darkness on earth – healings, deliverance, people set free, lives changes, futures secured. An all-out attack on evil in all its forms.
- At other times, he uses the agricultural images of planting & cultivating – “This is what the kingdom of God is like. A man **scatters seed** on the ground....” (Mark 4:26)
  - Again – widespread, scattering of the good news of the kingdom. Not keeping it close to the chest, keeping it within these 4 church walls where we are in a safe club.
  - Scattering it onto all sorts of soil – some will turn out to be good soil where the kingdom can flourish, some soil of people's lives will be rocky or weedy and prevent the kingdom taking real root.
    - Don't worry – that's not your responsibility! People will one day answer to God for their choices (John 12:47-48)
  - Jesus taught us not to discriminate to begin with. Don't only to good works, or share the good news to those you think might be worthy of it (Matt 5:46-47)
    - because the kingdom is upside-down, and often the most unlikely of people in the world's eyes take the offer of God into their hearts & lives.

I acknowledge that Jesus' mission began primarily to the Jewish nation, but He was quite clear that His death was for all, and the new mission of his disciples (then and now) is too work with God in his redeeming mission to this whole world. The whole world is a **wide** scope for our mission!

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<sup>1</sup> *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, David Bosch, Orbis: 1991, p.28

The word 'Save' (Greek verb = *sōzein*, noun = *sōtēria*) in the gospels & NT is not just used spiritually. When its used by Jesus, and by other NT authors, it means to save a person in the eternal sense, and to heal a person in the physical sense. 'Salvation' in the NT is 'total salvation' – its saves the whole person, body and soul, from all that would ruin him or her in this life and in the life to come.

*Sōzein* is also used 18 times related to J healing the sick. Eg. Matt 9:21 (woman with bleeding "She said to herself, "If I only touch his cloak, I will be *healed*") & Luke 8:36 (legion demons pigs) salvation from a physical condition which also had spiritual roots.

Matt 18:11 – to seek & save the lost (*sōzein* = salvation from 'lostness') To save a person from a way and a situation which would lead them to lose their life and lose their soul. To turn them from the way of life that leads to the most deadly kind of death, to the most vital kind of life.

- And people don't even know it – that's why they are described as 'lost', heading in the wrong direction without realising it. There is an imperative for us to speak up, act up, love up people enough so they realise and allow God to reorientate their lives around Him instead.

**"there is, in Jesus' ministry, no tension between saving from sin and saving from physical ailment, between the spiritual and the social."**<sup>2</sup> This is why we teach and live that becoming a follower of Jesus is so much more than bar-code Christianity!

*Reminds me of the old hymn:*

Wide, wide as the ocean, high as the Heaven above;  
Deep, deep as the deepest sea is my Savior's love.  
I, though so unworthy, still am a child of His care;  
For His Word teaches me that His love reaches me everywhere.

*Words & Music:* [C. Austin Miles](#), 1914

## Application

### Questions

- Is my missionary lifestyle widespread or limited?
- Do I have the same heart of Jesus to include everyone in the good thing I've found?
- Do I live with a heart for the whole world, the environment and international relations (like trade, tourism or conflict) too?

Perhaps you:

- ?only sharing gospel with your friends who are already Christians?!
- Only doing good works to 'people like me' where you are comfortable
- Hating some races or groups in your heart (French, Arabs, Osama Bin Laden)

So – when you engage with the world to promote health, fullness of life, good news to the poor, justice to the oppressed, mercy to your enemy – you are promoting God's mission, just as we see Jesus doing in the gospels. **So do it in Jesus' name.**

- I loved Anne's story last week – colleague & competing manager asked why she was kind, her boss said she does these things because she's a Christian.

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<sup>2</sup> *Transforming Mission: Paradigm Shifts in Theology of Mission*, David Bosch, Orbis: 1991, p.33

## Weak

Here comes the upside-down nature of Jesus and the kingdom... Even while he was liberally and freely spreading the kingdom of God to all who would receive it, operating in the power and authority of the earth's creator (John 13:3).... **Jesus operated as a missionary out of a place of weakness.**

He had a wide scope, an all encompassing mission, authority. Yet time and time again, Jesus refused to take the easy way out . Jesus own ministry was presented in weakness

- He often refused signs & wonders to impress the sceptical Jews
  - As Satan reminded him – he could have commanded legions of angels to support him and bring everyone to their knees – but instead humbled himself to 'Worship the Lord your God, and serve him only.' (Matt 4:10)
- Not everyone accepted or liked him – in fact, many tried to kill him by stoning on a few occasions, he wasn't popular with the authorities/leaders bc he told the straight truth, rather than what they wanted to hear
- He chose to have no living, no home, live an itinerant lifestyle on the road (Matt 8:20)
- He said again and again how he had to rely only on what he saw & heard his father doing – not in his own strength or initiative (John 5:19) and would deny himself regularly to get away from his friends and community into the wilderness of the local mountains to receive strength and direction again from his father
- Of course he voluntarily chose the ultimate weakness in order to achieve his ultimate mission – a public, humiliating death
- I was struck again when I read John 12+13 this week about how Jesus understood how grace is made perfect in weakness.
  - The triumphal entrance to Jerusalem (our Palm Sunday)
  - Jesus at the zenith of his popularity – the people were whispering & waiting for him to show himself at the festivals, just raised Lazarus from the dead, more & more people are putting their faith in him, he enters the city to shouts of 'Hosanna' (means save) and proclaiming Jesus as coming in God's name
    - Surely, now would be the time to capitalise on all this support
    - If he was a politician, he'd call a snap election, or pass that law he's been waiting for the right time for
    - If he was a modern celebrity he'd rush out the autobiography and the fitness DVD!
  - Instead, Jesus knew that glory to God comes, when the glory coming to YOU is impossible.
    - Jesus replied, "The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. 24I tell you the truth, unless a kernel of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains only a single seed. But if it dies, it produces many seeds. 25The man who loves his life will lose it, while the man who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. ... 27"Now my heart is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save me from this hour'? No, it was for this very reason I came to this hour. 28Father, glorify **your** name!" (John 12:23-28)
  - At the zenith of his popular appeal, Jesus knew that the farmer cuts off & prunes back branches bearing fruit, so that they might bear even more fruit in the future.
  - In order to be the world's greatest missionary, Jesus knew it would cost him his life.

**This is how we are to operate as missionaries. As Paul says, against all logic: "It is when I am weak that I am strong." (2 Cor 12:10)**

### Application

The first thing to remember as we live as missionaries is... its not your mission! We aren't like some Superman, off to save the world, the harder you try in your own strength, the less you'll probably achieve. It's God's mission – and He CAN do it! Follow Jesus' example – pray, spend time with the Trinity, get your instructions from him.

- **Am I hurried or humble?**

- Am I looking to see what the Father is doing?
- Am I listening to hear the Father's heart and instructions?
  - Eg. Alpha men last year – we just picked up on God's initiative (bc we heard God tell her to do it)
  - Eg. at church level, we see God blessing our families work – so we keep sowing there

Let Jesus' own weak approach encourage you. You may feel very weak, rather useless to God, very insignificant. Don't let that make you think you can't be a missionary in everyday life. Far from it

- You can be very useful to God if you feel and act weak.
  - Blessed are the meak, for they will inherit the earth
  - Blessed are those who realise they are poor in spirit, for theirs is.... The kingdom of heaven!

**Bring your weakness to God as an offering. Give it to Him, let Him carry it. Let Him use it.**

### Practical eggs

- Weakness in presenting the gospel
  - `you may be rebuffed, may seem like clever postmoderns will see Jesus as irrelevant
- Weakness in what you can offer
  - Can't change your neighbourhood or college in a day
    - But Jesus' way is love & service
    - Faithful in the small things. Start.....somewhere
- Weakness means being prepared to sacrifice and serve others
  - Out of the thankfulness & joy we have from life in God & HS

Bring your weakness to God as an offering. Give it to Him, let Him carry it. Let Him use it.

- Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt 11:29-30)

### Response

- Pray for those who feel weak – take yoke
- Pray for those who need to act more weak – submit at the cross
- Pray for open eyes & ears to see/hear all that God has for them to be & do