Called to the Missional Life

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Acts 22:1-16

Brothers and fathers, listen to the defense that I now make before you.’ 2
When they heard him addressing them in Hebrew, they became even more
quiet. Then he said: 3 ‘I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in
this city at the feet of Gamaliel, educated strictly according to our ancestral
law, being zealous for God, just as all of you are today. 4I persecuted this Way
up to the point of death by binding both men and women and putting them in
prison, 5as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify about
me. From them I also received letters to the brothers in Damascus, and I
went there in order to bind those who were there and to bring them back to
Jerusalem for punishment. 6 ‘While I was on my way and approaching
Damascus, about noon a great light from heaven suddenly shone about me. 7I
fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, “Saul, Saul, why are you
persecuting me?” 8I answered, “Who are you, Lord?” Then he said to me, “I
am Jesus of Nazareth, whom you are persecuting.” 9Now those who were with
me saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who was speaking to
me. 10I asked, “What am I to do, Lord?” The Lord said to me, “Get up and go
to Damascus; there you will be told everything that has been assigned to you
to do.” 11Since I could not see because of the brightness of that light, those
who were with me took my hand and led me to Damascus. 12 ‘A certain
Ananias, who was a devout man according to the law and well spoken of by
all the Jews living there, 13came to me; and standing beside me, he said,
“Brother Saul, regain your sight!” In that very hour I regained my sight and
saw him. 14Then he said, “The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know
his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice; 15for you will be
his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard. 16And now why
do you delay? Get up, be baptized, and have your sins washed away, calling
on his name.”

1. A Sense of Call

When I served on the District Committee on Board of Ordained Ministry in another conference, one of the committee’s responsibilities was to make sure that ministry candidates have a sense of call. One day the District Committee had an interview with one female candidate and asked her to share her experience related with God’s call. Unfortunately, she was not able to articulate her sense of call to the board members. She graduated from seminary a long time ago and was serving a church as a director of the senior adult ministry. But even though she was serving in a church, she was not able

to complete the process to become an ordained minister because she wasn't able to express her sense of calling.

The question that I often hear is, "Does God only call people to become ordained ministers?" The answer is no. As the children attending VBS learned, God has made everyone for a reason. We all have a purpose in this life. But does everyone know their purpose in life? From my experience, I'm not sure everyone does. Many people seem to live their lives without knowing why they are here in this world. This morning, I'd like to talk about how important it is for us to live a missional life.

2. St. Paul's Transformation

Today's scripture covers part of the life of the Apostle Paul. Paul, born as Saul, visited Jerusalem at the end of his third missionary journey. In Jerusalem, some of the Jews began to stir the crowd against Paul. The commander of the Roman troops ordered Paul be taken to the barracks. At the time, Paul asked the commander to let him speak to the people. The commander allowed Paul to speak to the people. Paul took the opportunity to share with the people how he became a follower of Jesus.

Acts 22:1 and following is Paul's speech to the people. Before becoming a follower of Christ, Paul was thoroughly committed to the law and to stamping out Christianity. However, Paul recounts his radical conversion to the people. In Acts 26:12 and following, Paul shares his experience again, explaining how he was the biggest opponent of Jesus, but now having met Jesus, is a follower and an apostle to the Gentiles.

When we reflect on this passage, we see two things that make Paul's transformation possible. The first is Paul's encounter with Jesus. The second key to Paul's transformation is Ananias' visit. Jesus asked Ananias to visit Paul. Although he was reluctant, he went to Paul, prayed for him, restored his sight, and baptized him.

In Acts 22:14-15, Ananias encourages Paul confirming that Paul has been chosen by God to be His witness to all the world: "***The God of our ancestors has chosen you to know his will, to see the Righteous One and to hear his own voice;*** [15]***for you will be his witness to all the world of what you have seen and heard.***" Ananias assures that Paul is called to live a missional life.

3. Changes in Paul's Attitude

After his transformation, Paul's life was changed. Before he met Jesus, Paul had been proud of his heritage. In Philippians 3:5-6, Paul says "[I was] ***circumcised on the eighth day, a member of the people of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrews; as to the law, a Pharisee;***

[6]***as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to righteousness under the law, blameless***."

But after meeting Jesus, Paul's focus in life becomes centered on the call that Jesus gives him. Paul later says, "***I regard everything as loss because of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord. For his sake I have suffered the loss of all things, and I regard them as rubbish, in order that I may gain Christ***." Paul's perspective on himself and on life was changed after encountering the Savior of the World.

4. Burden or Privilege

What does it mean to live a missional life for you and me? When we think about living a missional life, do we have a sense of burden, or a sense of privilege? Let me share with you a result of a survey. In a Schaeffer Institute study of 1,050 Reformed and Evangelical pastors, every pastor surveyed said they knew at least one colleague or friend from seminary who left the ministry because of burnout, conflict, or moral failure. Personally, I know a former clergy member in Missouri who resigned as an associate pastor and turned in his ordination. He finished his three-year seminary education and ordination process. Even though he had passed all the requirements, he felt overwhelmed by the daily pressures of working in a local church.

To be honest with you, recently I had a sense of stress and felt very tired. But God reminded me of His love and the grace of Jesus. The Lord also reminded me that God is the owner of my life and Jesus is the head of our church. I realized that I am called to rejoice and enjoy the privilege of being loved by God and being able to love God's people. When I love the Lord and his people all kinds of stress disappear and I am full of happiness.

5. A Korean Couple

I know a Korean couple who live a missional life. They are neither pastors nor missionaries, but devoted followers of Jesus. They have a biological son, and they adopted two daughters. But they say that they have 56 children. They have been supporting over 50 international children through Compassion. They send money every month to support them. They are planning to start a foster home in California and in Korea. In a recent interview, a reporter asked her whether they were happy. They answered that they are so happy because they are living according to God's mission.

6. Conclusion

God calls us all to live a missional life centered on loving God's people around us. Although God calls some to the ministry, even some to the

mission field, the truth is that God calls all of us and gives us a mission in this life to transform and impact the world for Jesus.

St. Francis of Assisi has a quote that speaks about the missional life. He says “Go into all the world and preach the Gospel; and if necessary, use words.” Our witness to the good news of Christ comes from living our lives as children of God and through our sharing of what God has done in our lives with those around us.

In order to live a missional life, we do not have to be pastors or missionaries. Henry Newman says. “If I am in sickness, my sickness may serve him; in perplexity, my perplexity may serve him; if I am in sorrow, my sorrow may serve him. He does nothing in vain. He knows what he is about. He may take away my friends; he may throw me among strangers; he may make me feel desolate, make my spirits sink, hide my future from me - still, he knows what he is about. Therefore, I will trust him.”

7. Application

This morning I am happy to introduce Patricia Dery, a missionary to the Middle East. She has been working in the Middle East to bring God’s word and knowledge to the Muslims in the region. Judie Sgarzi has been supporting her for a long time. Patricia will share her story with us this morning. May her story inspire us and challenge us to live a missional life.

We can sometimes think that our presence at church, our prayers, and our service doesn’t have an impact in the world. But the volunteering at VBS, the thoughtful phone calls and letters are all opportunities for us to share God’s love to those around us. Have we met with Jesus? Have we heard His voice calling us to live the missional life? Do we know what our mission is? Do we live the missional life?