Missional Living

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“When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on the throne of his glory. 32 All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, 33 and he will put the sheep at his right hand and the goats at the left. 34 Then the king will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, you that are blessed by my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; 35 for I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, 36 I was naked and you gave me clothing, I was sick and you took care of me, I was in prison and you visited me.’ 37 Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry and gave you food, or thirsty and gave you something to drink? 38 And when was it that we saw you a stranger and welcomed you, or naked and gave you clothing? 39 And when was it that we saw you sick or in prison and visited you?’ 40 And the king will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me.’ 41 Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels; 42 for I was hungry and you gave me no food, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, 43 I was a stranger and you did not welcome me, naked and you did not give me clothing, sick and in prison and you did not visit me.’ 44 Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when was it that we saw you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not take care of you?’ 45 Then he will answer them, ‘Truly I tell you, just as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to me.’ 46 And these will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.” (Matthew 25:31-45)

1. The Newsletter and the Christmas Bazaar

A few weeks ago, when I put together a newsletter, I was amazed to reflect on all the things our congregation has done during July through September this year. There were too many things to even mention in the newsletter. For example, according to our sign-up sheet, 9 men mowed the church lawn for 24 weeks and we ended up saving a good amount from the work. I was so grateful for the faithfulness of many people at our church.

Yesterday we had a Christmas Bazaar. Many people got together and helped to make the bazaar a success. I don’t think that anyone of us expected to be recognized for helping with a church bazaar, but I believe that God knows everything that you did, big and small and that God praises you for your contributions.

2. The Sheep and the Goats

Matthew 25:31-46 is Jesus' final sermon in Matthew's gospel. Jesus tells his disciples and us what is going to happen when he returns. Matthew tells us that Jesus will come back with all the angels and sit upon the throne as the king (v. 34). Then "***all the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats***" (v. 32).

Who are "all the people" in this passage? The meaning of "all the nations" is suggested differently. The potential meanings are: (1) all human beings, (2) all the gentiles, (3) all Christians, and (4) all non-Christians. Whatever the term "all the nations" means, the important point that is highlighted here is that every individual will be ultimately judged by the Lord according to what they have done. The image of judgment here reminds us of Zechariah 14:1-21 where every nation will recognize the kingship of God; "***the Lord will become king over all the earth***" (Zechariah 14:9).

Matthew tells us that from the throne, Jesus will separate people into two groups. To illustrate the separation of an individual from another, Jesus, like a shepherd, separates his flock of sheep from the goats who are grazing in the same pasture. The sheep are placed on his right hand, or the place of honor. These people will inherit God's kingdom (v. 34). The sheep are those who have demonstrated their faithfulness through their lives through loving-kindness shown throughout their lives, especially to the needy.

Matthew 25:40 & 41 says, "***Truly I tell you, just as you did it to one of the least of these who are members of my family, you did it to me***." Jesus says that whenever the people gave food to the hungry, welcomed a stranger, clothed the naked, or visited the sick or imprisoned, the acts of kindness were towards Jesus himself. The king invites these people to his kingdom and they are rewarded by the gift of eternal life.

The Lord also says to the goats on his left hand, "***You that are accursed, depart from me into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels*** (v. 41). What did the goats do wrong in this situation? The goats ignored the needy and failed to extend mercy to others. Matthew tells us that these goats will be permanently separated from God and be punished, for they failed to see Christ in others. What we learn from this passage is that the sheep and the goats were ultimately surprised by Jesus' actions.

3. The Church Conference

The passage tells us that both the sheep and goats did not remember what they had done. In preparing for tomorrow's annual church conference, I prepared a report. While writing a report, I was surprised by all the great things our church was able to do this past year. The writing of the report reminded me that it is important to reflect and assess on what we do every day. If we write a

report not for the annual church conference but for the Lord, what would you and I write about? Would you and I be on the right hand of our Lord?

4. Missional Living

Perhaps the best way to evaluate our lives is to reflect on the daily things that we do from the perspective of God and others. We don't always notice what we do on a daily basis, but God and others are aware of very well.

King David says in Psalm 139:1-2, "***O Lord, you have searched me and known me.*** ***2*** ***You know when I sit down and when I rise up; you discern my thoughts from far away***." God knows what time we get up and what time we go to bed. The Lord knows our weaknesses, shortcomings, secrets, and shames. Yet God loves, forgives, protects, and guides us nonetheless. God is always with us through every situation of the day and the Lord knows our every act of loving kindness that we show to others. How can others experience this loving kindness from us constantly? This isn't the result of our hard work or determination but the result of a missionary driven mindset rooted in Christ.

Today's sermon title is "Missional Living." The concept of missional living has long been discussed among Christians. The term "missional living" does not mean that Christians should preach the gospel in foreign countries. Rather, the term means that as followers of Christ, we live every aspect of our lives following Jesus in God's mission of loving people. Jesus fed the hungry, gave drink to the thirsty, healed the sick, opened the eyes of the blind, and became a friend to the lonely. As disciples of Jesus, we are called to do the same things that Jesus did to others. How do we know if we and others are living with a missional mindset? We live with missional mindsets when we reflect Jesus and regard others as more important than ourselves.

5. William Borden

As we reflect on missional living, I'd like to share about the life of a young Christian man named William Borden. Borden graduated from high school in Chicago and after graduating, traveled to Asia, the Middle East and Europe. As he traveled, Borden felt a growing burden for the people in need in the world. He wrote home that he wanted to be a missionary and wrote on the back of his Bible "no reserves."

Borden would later go to college at Yale. By the end of his first year, Borden would gather with 150 freshmen every week for Bible study and prayer. As a senior, Borden gathered with 1,000 of the 1,300 students at Yale at the time as part of this group. At graduation Borden turned down several high paying job offers and wrote in the back of his Bible "no retreats."

He would later study at Princeton Seminary in New Jersey and decided to sail to China to work with the Muslims in China. Borden traveled to Egypt on his way to China to study Arabic, where he suddenly contracted spinal meningitis

and died within a month of contracting the disease. Prior to his death, Borden wrote in the back of his Bible, “no regrets.” Borden had written “no reserves, no retreats, no regrets” in the back of his Bible. That was his moto in his life.

Borden was only 25 years old at the time of his death, but his life would leave a lasting impact on many people. When he died, the Princeton Seminary Bulletin declared, “No young man of his age has ever given more to the service of God and humanity.” Although his life was very short, the Lord would praise Borden for his missional life following after the Lord with love and passion.

6. Conclusion

How can we live our lives like Bill Borden, the disciples of Jesus, or St. Paul? St. Paul, the disciples, and Bill Borden were all people just like us. However, their lives made a big impact on others. How can we live such lives on mission for Jesus?

Jesus said to his disciples before he ascended. “***you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth”*** (Acts 1:8). When the Holy Spirit was poured upon the disciples, their lives were transformed. Acts 4:31-32 says, “***the whole group of those who believed were of one heart and soul, and no one claimed private ownership of any possessions, but everything they owned was held in common***.” Some people ask how the disciples shared without claiming ownership of their possessions? Acts 4:31 says, “***they were all filled with the Holy Spirit***.” We are able to live missional lives by receiving and relying on the Holy Spirit. The Spirit would empower us to live such an unthinkable life.

7. Application

Is living missionally a burden or a blessing for us? In 1 Thessalonians 5:10 & 11 & 16-18, St. Paul says, “***who died for us, so that whether we are awake or asleep we may live with him.*** *11* ***Therefore encourage one another and build up each other, as indeed you are doing.”… “Rejoice always,*** *17* ***pray without ceasing,*** *18* ***give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you***.”

Living our entire lives for God can initially sound like impossible. But this passage reveals to us that living wholly focused on God’s mission for our lives allows us to be filled with a constant joy. Throughout my ministry I saw many disciples who loved the Lord and others with great joy and happiness. God sent each of us into the world to be God’s hands and feet in the world as part of the body of Christ. God wants our missional lives to bring us joy, peace, and happiness. And God wants others to experience the same kind of joy, peace, and happiness through sharing acts of loving-kindness with others. Thanks be to God for giving us such a wonderful privilege. Amen.