

THE COURSE (MISSION FOR GOD)

The Renewed Church:

Matthew 28:16-20

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Bethany Church

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Have you ever walked into a room and then wondered why you are there? The mind can wander. Sometimes, it has little choice. A phone call, a door bell, a voice, a visitor like a mouse or a bat, a question or captivating thought can all interrupt and command one's attention.

People traveling to the store can be distracted by car trouble, an accident, a robbery or some other incident and forget what they came for. For me, it takes nothing so striking to wonder why I am in a place. I have been sent to a store for a single item like sugar and then seen things like peanut butter, milk and bread and forgot the sugar. To overcome such tendencies I found it takes disciplined thinking. That means I must not allow myself to think about the other things until I accomplish the task for which I'm sent, or I must write a check list that I keep in hand and closely follow. Whatever the case, I've discovered that I can easily forget my mission if I don't take some steps to assure that I follow through.

One striking pattern of Jesus is how he *kept himself conscious* of his mission.

First, he made his mission public knowledge. After gaining some notoriety, Jesus returned home and read these Scriptures in his local synagogue:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has appointed me to preach Good News to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that

the blind will see, that the downtrodden will be freed from their oppressors, and that the time of the Lord's favor has come. (Luke 4:18-19, NLT)

Then he said, ***“This Scripture has come true today before your very eyes”*** (Luke 4:21). In this way Jesus publicly stated his mission. Now he could be held accountable. Now he could be taken to task. He was “on record” with his friends, family and home community. With whom are you “on record” about your purpose and mission? Let there be no ambiguity. This church is “on record.” Our mission is a command. “Go and bring people to faith and freedom in Jesus Christ.” We’ve made ourselves publicly accountable. Any casual observer can look at us and see if we are sincere or pretending.

Jesus not only went “on record,” he also kept his focus despite distractions. The first great wave of healing through Jesus occurred in Capernaum when Jesus first healed Peter’s mother-in-law. Following that, much of the sick from the city came (Mark 1:32-34). Early before dawn the next day Jesus left the city and walked the countryside in prayer. As the day advanced, his disciples searched for and found him. They said, ***“Everyone is asking for you”*** (Mark 1:37). Jesus responded:

We must go on to other towns as well, and I will preach to them, too, because that is why I came. (Mark 1:38, NLT)

Why did Jesus leave the admiring crowd in Capernaum? He was conscious of his mission. How did he know his mission? First, he was aware of the unfolding plan of God revealed in the Scriptures. That is why he announced his mission in his home synagogue by reading a prophecy and telling his family and friends it was being fulfilled. He knew his role in the unfolding plan of God that is revealed in Scripture. Second, he prayed. He talked and listened to the Father through the Spirit. How else could he know how he fit into God’s unfolding plan and what he ought to do at a particular moment? Do you understand how you fit?

Are you praying about your mission? Are you listening to the Holy Spirit? Are you conscious of your mission and do you have direction about what to do at a particular moment?

Another reason Jesus was conscious of his mission is that he spoke about it often:

For even I, the Son of Man, came here not to be served but to serve others, and to give my life as a ransom for many. (Mark 10:45, NLT)

I, the Son of Man, have come to seek and save those like him who are lost. (Luke 19:10, NLT)

For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him will not perish but have eternal life. God did not send his Son into the world to condemn it, but to save it. (John 3:16-17, NLT)

I am the bread of life. No one who comes to me will ever be hungry again. Those who believe in me will never thirst. But you haven't believed in me even though you have seen me. However, those the Father has given me will come to me, and I will never reject them. For I have come down from heaven to do the will of God who sent me, not to do what I want. And this is the will of God, that I should not lose even one of all those he has given me, but that I should raise them to eternal life at the last day. For it is my Father's will that all who see his Son and believe in him should have eternal life — that I should raise them at the last day. (John 6:35-40, NLT)

I am the gate. Those who come in through me will be saved. Wherever they go, they will find green pastures. The thief's purpose is to steal and kill and destroy. My purpose is to give life in all its fullness. I am the good shepherd. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep. (John 10:9-11, NLT)

Jesus states his mission in various ways. He does that so people can better understand what he is about. That's not all. When people try to press him in to a certain pattern or foist on him certain expectations, he states what his mission is *not*:

Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn "a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law- a man's enemies will be the members of his own household." (Matthew 10:34-36, NIV)

The decision to follow Jesus will divide many families. That's because the need for salvation is more fundamental than the need for family harmony. Indeed, true harmony comes only when

our hearts are set free by Jesus from the forces that deceive and corrupt them. Any other harmony is merely a truce. Jesus was conscious of that. He was conscious of what he was called to do and what he was not called to do.

Even desperate need did not distract Jesus from his mission. A Canaanite woman called to Jesus for help. Jesus ignored her pleas understanding that he was called only to the “lost sheep of Israel.” Finally, God showed Jesus through this woman’s persistence and faith that her daughter was included in Jesus’ mission. Then and only then did he respond to her need (Matthew 15:22-28).

A survey of the life of Jesus reveals that tenacity, determination and discipline were required for him to be faithful to his mission and calling. There were many temptations to deviate. We face that too.

In the past few weeks, we’ve discussed what is necessary to be a renewed church or a renewed people. We must embrace the AIM of Christ. We need to receive his A – Anointing, experience his I – Intimacy and pursue his M – Mission. We need the Spirit of God clothing us with power, encouraging us in love and counseling us in service.

Specifically, God has given to you and me a great vision. It is often called the Great Commission. Jesus told his disciples:

I have been given complete authority in heaven and on earth. Therefore, go and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you. And be sure of this: I am with you always, even to the end of the age. (Matthew 28:18-20, NLT)

Since all or complete authority in heaven and earth now belonged to Jesus, they were to make disciples of all nations. Since he is rightful Lord, disciples are appropriate everywhere; and since all authority belongs to him, they could make disciples everywhere. There is more.

That vision was further fleshed out in three commands: go, baptize and teach to obey. They were directed to go rather than wait for people to come. They were commanded to baptize people. In doing this, people received a new identity. They received a new identity with God as their father, Jesus as their savior and the Spirit as their companion. Finally, they were to teach these folk to obey all the commands Jesus gave them, including make disciples of all nations, go, baptize and teach to obey. All their call lies on us. Jesus promised that he through the Spirit would be with us all until the mission is finished and the age of redemption is complete.

When you are walking with Jesus, you have a power that awes you, an intimacy that directs you and a mission that energizes you. You are not powerless. You are not a mule that has to be led with bit and bridle. You do not wander from thing to thing aimlessly.

I remember when I lacked that power and sought it. When the Holy Spirit came on me and I received such love, I was excited. I could not keep my mouth shut. I know that is not hard to imagine. I've never been able to keep my mouth shut. The difference is that I could not help but share the love of God. However, my unbelief and sins frequently got in the way of my communion with the Father. Graciously, I have been brought to repentance again and again, experiencing the release and freedom of forgiveness. What an amazing joy! In that intimacy I've come to know my mission. I know what my Father wants me to do with my time on this earth. I know my call. I'm sent with the Holy Spirit by our heavenly Father in partnership with Jesus to mobilize the reproduction of Christ's church and the witness of Christ in every community on the planet, so that every person has a priest (like you) ministering to them and every people have a church in their culture reaching them. That's my life mission. How I accomplish it day in and day out depends upon the direction of the Holy Spirit.

Do you know your mission? Can you state it? You are not meant to wonder and wander.