

Method: Mission

Acts 1:8 (& assorted Acts verses) Pastor Bland Mason 9.17.2017

BIG Idea: Jesus sends his church on mission.

INTRODUCTION

- Great series for us as a church celebrating our 7th anniversary this month. I love the feedback I'm hearing and love that it is sparking some good conversations about how we can grow in loving Brookline and Boston in the name of Jesus.
- **PICTURES** –A couple of weeks ago our CoaH Kids took a little time to do some drawing of what they think of when they hear God loves the city. Here are a few of them. 4 PICTURES
- Over the last couple of weeks, we have looked at the gospel and community as the motivation and the means of loving the city but the question remains, "How does Jesus use the gospel community to love the city?" What is his method? Jesus' method is to take sinners like me and save them through the power of the gospel. That the power of his sinless life, his substitutionary death on the cross in my place, and his rising from the grave victorious over death cleanses me from sin, gives me new life, and restores me to a right relationship with God.
- He then takes restored people and puts them in a great big diverse spiritual family where we walk with each other as we walk with him. We saw last week that this community is a counter-cultural community that looks different than the rest of the city. It doesn't hide out from the city but is an alternative city within the city. A city that lives by the power of the gospel.
- And this is where the method of Loving the City comes in. The same mission that brought the gospel to us and is the foundation for City on a Hill, sends us out to declare the good news of the gospel. The church exists BECAUSE of mission and FOR mission. TURN TO ACTS 1...
- The church exists because of mission because Jesus came on mission for every one of his people. The church exists FOR mission because **Jesus sends his church on mission**. That's our BIG Idea for today and we are going to see it in Acts 1.
- Acts 1:1-11 – When I am finished I will say, "This is the word of the Lord." Please respond by saying, "Thanks be to God."
 - ¹ *In the first book, O Theophilus, I have dealt with all that Jesus began to do and teach, ² until the day when he was taken up, after he had given commands through the Holy Spirit to the apostles whom he had chosen. ³ He presented himself alive to them after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God.*
 - ⁴ *And while staying with them he ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, "you heard from me; ⁵ for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."*
 - ⁶ *So when they had come together, they asked him, "Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?" ⁷ He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons that the Father has fixed by his own authority. ⁸ But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." ⁹ And when he had said these things, as they were looking on, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. ¹⁰ And while they were gazing into heaven as he went, behold, two men stood by them in white robes, ¹¹ and said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking into heaven? This Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven."*
- Keep your bible open as we will be honing in on v.8 but looking at other verses around it as well as a few from other parts of the book of Acts.
- Acts is could be called the Gospel of Luke, part 2, since it was written by Luke and picks up right where his

gospel ends. Instead of telling the story of Jesus' life, death, and resurrection like his gospel, Luke tells the story of the early church. What it gives us is a glimpse of what the church's mission and how it worked out mainly in the cosmopolitan urban areas of the first century Roman empire. It really is the story of how a small group of 120 Christians gathered together after Jesus' resurrection and ascension turned into a major movement that ended up spreading across 3 continents and the approximately 75 million people of the Roman Empire so that by 313 Emperor Constantine decriminalized Christianity and declared himself a Christian.

•How did that start? Acts 1:8 highlights the Purpose, the power, the program and the problems of the mission.

The Purpose: Be Jesus' witnesses

- v.8 *"you will be my witnesses"* – Jesus told the disciples, you are going to tell others about me. You are going to speak the truth about what you have seen and experienced. You know that I, as the Son of God, walked among you, and that I died on the cross for the sins of the world, and that 3 days later I rose, victorious over death. And now, forgiveness of sins and eternal life is available to every person who will repent and believe.
- This message is THE most important message any human being can ever hear. Acts 4:12 *"And there is salvation in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved."*
- Declaring this message is the mission of Jesus' people. Being a part of the church means stepping into this mission. And it means putting yourself in the middle of what God is doing in the world.
- John Stott, *"The church lies at the very center of the eternal purpose of God. It is not a divine afterthought. It is not an accident of history. On the contrary, the church is God's new community. For His purpose, conceived in a past eternity, being worked out in history, and to be perfected in a future eternity, is not just to save isolated individuals and so perpetuate our loneliness but rather to build His church, that is, to call out of the world a people for His own glory."* *The Living Church* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP, 2007), 19.
- The language we use around here is *"We are here to help our friends and neighbors find and follow Jesus."* READ OUTLOUD WITH ME. This mission is our purpose in Brookline and Boston.
- Your purpose in life is not being an engineer. It's your passion and your vocation but not your purpose. Your purpose is to make Jesus known. If you are a student the reason you were put in Boston is not to simply get an education, it is to make Jesus known. If you are a stay-at-home mom, as great as that is, your purpose in life is not being a mom. Your purpose is to live for God and be a witness to the power of the gospel of Jesus to bring life.
- What does it matter if you achieve all of your vocational dreams and get to the top of your field or have a bunch of fun along the way if you haven't lived for your eternal purpose in Christ's kingdom? If we have 100's and 100's of people respect us for our success, for our friendliness, or for our intellectual achievements but we fail to ever speak the life-giving message of Jesus to them, we have missed our purpose.
- Jesus sends his church on mission to be witnesses to him. That's the purpose.

The Power: Holy Spirit in us

- Jesus tells the disciples in v.4 to make sure they stayed in Jerusalem because they were going to be baptized with the Holy Spirit there to prepare them for mission. He wanted to make sure they didn't miss out on power of the Spirit.
- v.8 *"you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."* And what we see in Acts 2 is exactly that. The Spirit comes down and moves in a crazy, miraculous way. Literally 1000's of people are reached with the gospel and experience new life in Christ that day.
- Acts 2:41-47 – Right after Peter preached to 100's of thousands of people who had gathered in Jerusalem for a festival...
⁴¹ So those who received his word were baptized, and there were added that day about three thousand

souls. ⁴²And they devoted themselves to the apostles' teaching and the fellowship, to the breaking of bread and the prayers. ⁴³And awe came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were being done through the apostles. ⁴⁴And all who believed were together and had all things in common. ⁴⁵And they were selling their possessions and belongings and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need. ⁴⁶And day by day, attending the temple together and breaking bread in their homes, they received their food with glad and generous hearts, ⁴⁷praising God and having favor with all the people. And the Lord added to their number day by day those who were being saved.

- Throughout Acts and the rest of the NT the Spirit's presence and power are tied to mission. The word "power" here is the same word used of Jesus' miracles in the gospels. In other words, when the church is filled with the Holy Spirit's power it has the same power Jesus used to perform his miracles. That's a lot of power.
- One of the marks of the people of God living on the mission of God is the presence of the power of the Holy Spirit. Power to be witnesses, to be faithful, to see God-sized fruit in people's lives.
- This power is so great and so significant that it gives eternal life to spiritually dead people like me. It opens eyes that Satan himself has shut. It cleanses people and frees people from all of their sin and shame.
- We can ALL be filled. But not just filled now while we are together. We are filled for the purpose of mission and mission doesn't happen very much right here. Yes, there are those today who are here exploring Jesus but generally speaking, the mission happens NOT when the church is gathered but when the church is scattered. The church gathered is our gatherings but the church scattered is what happens throughout the week.

ILL – You can look at it this way (Map of our CGs on screen). These are our CGs around the city this week. And the Spirit fills them with power to love their neighborhoods and to be faithful witnesses to the gospel of Jesus. The power is for the purpose of mission. BUT beyond our CGs we could draw 100's of small dots on a map of where City on a Hill is going to be tomorrow at this time. Spread across the city. And the power of the Holy Spirit fills EVERY ONE of Jesus' people to be on mission in their workplaces, schools, and communities.

- Jesus sends his church on mission and he gives us the power we need to carry out that mission wherever he places us. Indeed he put us there ON PURPOSE to be on mission with our neighbors and co-workers. If you ignore that you are snubbing the mission, missing the power, and you are literally telling the people around you to go to hell. I know that sounds harsh but if Jesus put you where you are and you don't pray for or even engage those around you with the only message that gives eternal life you need to repent. You are not a loving person or you don't believe the gospel that you say you have experienced.
- Jesus sends his church on mission and gives us ALL the power we will need. NOT before we go on mission but WHILE we go on mission.

The Program: To the ends of the earth

- v.8 "you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth." Jesus literally rolled out the program for the next 2000 years and beyond. This description starts with Jerusalem (where they were) and Judea and Samaria (nearby regions) and to the ends of the earth (which included the whole Roman Empire, including going into Africa through the Ethiopian Eunuch in Acts 8).
- The entire bible is focused on this mission program of God. It started with Abraham in Genesis but comes into clear focus in the New Testament. The church's mission of taking the gospel out is usually highlighted from a few passages in the NT but the fact is the entire NT is mission focused.
- NT Wright, Professor at St. Andrews and world renowned New Testament scholar put it this way...
"Matthew's Jesus instructs his disciples to make disciples and baptize in all the world. Luke's Jesus commissions his followers to go to Jerusalem, Judaea and the ends of the earth, and John's Jesus says

“as the Father sent me, so I send you”. The story of Acts is the story, or rather a story, of early Christian mission. And ... the letters [of Paul] confirm that not only he but a good many other Christians ... believed it their business to travel around the known world telling people that there was ‘another king, this Jesus’. World mission is thus the first and most obvious feature of early Christian praxis.” (*The New Testament and the People of God*)

- What does this mean, then? It means that mission is at the heart of the gospel message and therefore it is at the heart of the church. And Jesus’ church has been carrying out this mission for 2000 years. And this is where Loving the City comes in. If you look at how the gospel went out during the New Testament, there is no missing that they focused on cities. They loved the cities by sharing the gospel message there and starting churches in the urban areas of the empire.
- There is a book by a great Missiologist Roland Allen called “*Missionary Methods: St. Paul’s or Ours?*” where he highlights how Paul focused on cities in the early church and it was absolutely pivotal in the early church’s growth. Paul hit major cities on major trade routes and shipping ports. Here’s a **MAP of his church planting journeys**.
- As we talked about in week 1, cities are hubs of education, culture, finance, innovation, and more. Cities are melting pots of humanity and most of the cities of the Roman empire were very diverse. Because Paul and the early Christians focused on living in cities and being on mission, the gospel changed the Roman Empire.
- Today, the Jesus’ church stands as the largest, most diverse, global movement in the history of the world. We talked last week about how the local church is to be diverse but I forgot to highlight that the Church, with a big “C”, IS diverse. Not predominately white, nor black, nor any other ethnicity. If a representative from the 50 largest ethnicities and nationalities within the Christian faith were in this room right now, it would look like a gathering of the United Nations. What human beings long for, at its best, the unity of every tribe and nation across the earth is being achieved by Jesus through his church.
- Jesus sent the church on mission and gave the program for that mission. If you are a Christian, you are here because that program has been carried out. And now, God has put you in in the middle of one of the most influential cities in the world. The nations are here working, studying, and doing life. How will you help carry out this program. You get to use your life to play a part in Jesus program.
- Jesus sent his church on mission. He gave the purpose, the power, and the program. But what we also find in the midst of our passage today is the problems related to the mission.

The Problems

- Despite what we see in Acts 2 where the Holy Spirit is poured out and the people carry out the mission of God and 1000’s are saved, there were problems with the mission all along the way. Here are a few...
- **In the family but not on the mission** – The disciples were asking about Israel being restored. After Jesus ascended, the disciples were staring up at the sky, waiting for Jesus to come back and restore the kingdom NOW. Jesus didn’t fit their expectation before he was crucified... Davidic King throwing off Rome. BUT after, I am sure they thought, surely the Risen King Jesus will usher in his kingdom and throw off Roman rule.
- They were about a different mission, one that was awesome for them but really stinks for those who are far from God. This happens EVERY time Christians decide to be in the family but not on the mission. We are glad for what is good for us but we don’t think about those who will go to bed tonight alienated from their Creator and under his wrath.
- **Power source** – Jesus emphasized in Acts and in a couple of other places “you NEED to stay in Jerusalem” so you can receive power. The danger was the church would try to carry out Jesus’ mission without the Jesus’ power. He sent the Holy Spirit, the 3rd member of the Trinity, to mediate the presence and power of God to his people. When Jesus said in the Great Commission, “I am with you always, even to the end

of the age” he was saying, “I will be with you in power for the purpose of mission.”

Our Obstacles to being on mission. GOOD BUT MOVE IT!

1. I’m not “there” yet – something needs to happen – graduation, overcoming a particular sin, more bible knowledge etc. That misses that Jesus wants to use you NOW. He placed you where you are today and he knows you struggle. He died for you BECAUSE you struggle. Be honest and step into his purpose.
 2. I have insecurities – I need to be liked. I don’t have all the answers.
 3. I secretly doubt Jesus can save the people around me.
 4. It will be too hard – CGs don’t want to multiply, we are content with our faith where it is, we don’t want to give up what we enjoy.
 5. Indifference to those who are far from Jesus. We don’t want to admit this one but we can be so caught up with our lives, our goals, our relationships, and our problems that we don’t give any bandwidth to those who do not have eternal life.
- ILL- It occurred to me this week that TODAY IS THE ANNIVERSARY OF MY ORDINATION. I was 23 years old when I became a pastor of a small church and on this very date, I was ordained to ministry. Now, to fill you in a bit. I am an Enneagram type 8 – the Challenger. So I try to live, breath, and eat confidence and strength. Storm the mountain, lead the way, and win. When it comes to “fear of failure” 8’s have an extraordinary ability to push it aside, squash it down deep, and act like its not there. That’s how it has been through my whole ministry. It is not that I haven’t recognized when I fail. Quite the contrary. It just means that when facing a new situation or if I am feeling unsure, I try to overcome it by confidence and win by sheer will.
 - This had an impact on how I looked at Jesus mission and his calling on me to come to Boston to plant a church. I had some fear of failure but rather than letting that sober me and lead me to press more into Jesus, I planned more, raised more money, and worked relentlessly. I missed the point about the mission – its Jesus’ mission and therefore its NOT about MY strength but his strength.
 - See, it is not about whether I feel good about things but whether I am faithful to the mission. And Jesus didn’t ask me to define success for him. He asked me to be faithful. When I walk in faith in Jesus and in obedience to his mission HE will achieve through you exactly what he wants to do.
 - Could I ask you to do one thing to take a step on mission this week? Pray everyday for 2 things: 1) Pray for your non-Christian friends. 2) Pray for the Holy Spirit to fill you with the power you need. Every morning get up and pray, “Jesus, would you move in my friends heart and would you fill me with your Holy Spirit so I can be faithful to you and your mission?”

COMMUNION – Matthew 26:26-29

²⁶Now as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and after blessing it broke it and gave it to the disciples, and said, “Take, eat; this is my body.”²⁷ And he took a cup, and when he had given thanks he gave it to them, saying, “Drink of it, all of you,²⁸ for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins.²⁹ I tell you I will not drink again of this fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father’s kingdom.” Perfect communion will happen when the mission is completed.

***Unless otherwise notes, all verses are taken from the *English Standard Version*, copyright 2000, Crossway Books; Material used from Logos Bible Software Platinum edition; “Why God Made Cities” article by Tim Keller; *Why Cities Matter* by Justin Buzzard and Stephen Um; *Center Church* by Tim Keller.