

Habits of a healthy church: Mission

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Preacher: James Ross

[0 : 00] Lord we thank you for another opportunity to worship you Father Son and Holy Spirit to worship you that you are the one true king our creator and that you are in the Lord Jesus Christ also our great savior and we worship you Father for that plan of salvation established before the foundation of the earth now we worship you Lord Jesus for coming to accomplish the plan of salvation in your perfectly obedient life in your sacrificial death and then in your victorious resurrection we praise you Holy Spirit for applying the work of salvation to the hearts and lives of men and women and boys and girls all around the globe the fact that anybody confesses

Jesus as Lord is completely a work of your grace and so we thank you we thank you that we have good news to share we have news of a God of covenant love a God who is faithful to his promises and faithful to his people a God of great grace who delights to save those who do not deserve it delighting to love the unlovely Lord we thank you that our good news is not just for some but Jesus is the savior for all peoples now we remember that throughout your word there is that call to all the peoples to praise you and so as we particularly focus on mission as we find it in the book of acts as we think about the importance of mission in a local church we thank you that we can pray towards the great goal of mission of seeing people become worshipers of you their father through Jesus the son and by the spirit

Lord we think of those agencies who are involved in translating the Bible and we know that people need to hear the gospel to hear the good news of salvation as it's found in the Bible for them to be saved and so Lord we pray for every translation project that's happening right now give all skill and wisdom to those who are busy doing that in different parts of the world so that people would have the Bible in their heart language to be able to hear from you Lord we also pray recognizing that there are so many people groups who are as yet unreached that there are billions of people living today who have never heard of Jesus who will never have the chance to meet a Christian who will never have a Christian church established in their village or town or city unless you work powerfully by your spirit and so we pray for those who are unreached asking that you would put it on the hearts of a Christian people all around the world and put it on our hearts too to be ready to pray and to give and even if you would call us to go to make Jesus known

Lord we recognize that our great calling is to glorify you and to enjoy you and we know that that's an enjoyment that is to be shared and so we pray that you'd help us locally now we pray that you'd help us individually to be about the business of mission while we also pray for what you are doing around the globe father tonight we pray especially for the nation of India with over 1 billion unreached people and Lord we ask that from the the Christians in that country and from out with you would lay it on people's hearts to learn those new languages to engage with those different cultures to be able to make sacrifices for the sake of taking the gospel to where it's not gone yet and Lord we pray for some of the unreached peoples in Sri Lanka and we pray the same that by your spirit you would bring openness where at the moment things are closed Lord we pray too for those parts of the world where our brothers and sisters in Christ are persecuted so severely we think of North Korea and Iran and Afghanistan we think of

Yemen we think of attacks in places like Nigeria and Pakistan and Lord so many live in fear so many are imprisoned for their faith so many are watched as they go to a church service or are denied the privilege of worship Lord as much as we want to be more and more thankful for what we have we also pray for our brothers and sisters that you would refresh them in their chains in their limited freedom may they continue to persevere with hope and with joy and may you use their lives and their witness to bring others to bring their oppressors to bring their captors to faith in the Lord Jesus so we pray that you'd help us as we spend time in your word and that you would guide us by your spirit we pray in Jesus name amen so we have two readings from the book of

[6 : 13] Acts both are on the screens but you can also use your device or a church bible so we'll be in Acts chapter 1 and the first 11 verses so Luke's introduction to this book and then Acts 13 and just the first five verses where we will consider the church in Antioch and mission there so let's hear God's word in my former book Theophilus I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach until the day he was taken up to heaven after giving instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles he had chosen after his suffering he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive he appeared to them over a period of 40 days and spoke about the kingdom of God on one occasion while he was eating with them he gave them this command do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my father promised which you have heard me speak about for John baptized with water but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit then they gathered round him and asked him Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel he said to them it is not for you to know the times or dates the father has set by his own authority but you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth after he had said this he was taken up before their very eyes and a cloud hid him from their sight they were looking intently up into the sky as he was going when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them men of Galilee they said why do you stand here looking into the sky this same Jesus who has been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven and then in Acts chapter 13 and the first five verses we read this now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers

Barnabas Simeon called Niger Lucius of Cyrene Manan who'd been brought up with Herod the Tetrarch and Saul while they were worshipping the Lord and fasting the Holy Spirit said set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them so after they'd fasted and prayed they placed their hands on them and sent them off the two of them sent on their way by the Holy Spirit went down to Seleucia and sailed from there to Cyprus when they arrived at Salamis they proclaimed the word of God in the Jewish synagogues John was with them as their helper and we will leave it there we'll consider some other texts from Acts and other places but as we continue thinking about habits of a healthy church here's habit four a healthy church cares about God's glory and global mission and one of the things I hope is that we'll see that those two absolutely belong together let's begin thinking about motives for mission perhaps the most striking or sobering statistic that I came across this week is this one consider this for a moment as we look around our small church gathering this Sunday evening there are more Christians in this building than there are in the whole of North Yemen a place with 8 million people there are still 7,400 unreached people groups an unreached people group an unreached people group is one where there are so few Christians that the church will never be until the spirit moves strong enough to evangelize the rest of the group 455 of those unreached people groups have over 10 million people in them India has over 1 billion people today who are still unreached and so quite often when we think about the motives for mission we go straight to need and the needs are evident we don't need to go far we can just think about our own streets the reality of people facing a lost eternity without knowing Christ as Savior need is there but the primary motive that we find in God's word for mission is the glory of God listen to Romans 15 in fact you can turn to Romans 15 this is a point where Paul is explaining his desire to take the gospel to places where nobody else has taken it so he wants to keep traveling and as part of that so Romans 15 is all about that and from verses 9 to 12 he quotes from four different

Old Testament texts so his desire is that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy as it's written therefore I will praise you among the Gentiles I will sing the praises of your name this is motivation again it says rejoice you Gentiles with his people book of Deuteronomy that stated intention of God's desire that the Gentiles would be worshippers with the Jews and again this time from Psalm 117 praise the Lord all you Gentiles let all the peoples extol him then Isaiah 11 the root of Jesse will spring up one who will arise to rule over the nations in him the Gentiles will hope and so Paul recognizes Jesus is this king Jesus is both king and hope for the nations and so his desire was to go to new places so that more people would recognize and know Jesus as their king but the glory of God is the primary motivator in scripture for mission John Piper famously put it missions exist because worship doesn't we support mission because God deserves honor and we want to see people being worshippers of him so a healthy local church then cares about local and global mission but if you know anybody who has been involved in mission or if you

know anybody who organizes mission conferences you will probably recognize that it's typical that support comes from those who are more elderly perhaps people who are on the mission field for a long time those who have been faithful and praying for decades whereas people would recognize mission agencies organizations would recognize that for a younger generation there's that sense well mission's not really my thing

[13 : 46] I don't really do the mission thing but one thing that I hope that we can see from the word of God is that if we care about God being glorified in the world so if we care about God's honor then we will care about God's global mission and how we get involved in that will look different but we should at very base level care about it we should care about all people enjoying the gospel and praising Jesus and so it's really helpful to look at Acts which is the great missions book first half which focuses so much on the apostles as they testify to the Lord Jesus even as they face opposition even as they find themselves having to scatter from Jerusalem and then the second half which focuses principally on Paul's missionary journeys so tonight we're going to look at Luke's introduction to the book of Acts which in a sense gives us some principles and also sort of make some observations of how that sort of worked itself out in the local church in Antioch in chapter 13 to help us all consider what's my part to play in God building his global kingdom so let me by way of

I guess defining where we're going let me sort of spell it out and then break it down so a healthy church will care about God's mission to continue the work of Jesus depending on the Holy Spirit and bearing witness to Jesus in the world and I think we can see all of that in the first 11 verses of Acts so the first thing to notice is that a church on mission continues the work of Jesus and we're just going to think about the first four verses to help us with that as Luke begins his book he says in my former book Theophilus I wrote about all that Jesus began to do and to teach and it's been recognized that if the gospel of Luke is what Jesus began to do then we should understand the book of Acts is what Jesus continues to do now through his church and by the Spirit the gospel of Luke speaks about the birth of Jesus the life of Jesus including his teaching and his miracles his suffering his death the victory of his resurrection and his ascension it is the record of Jesus' ministry on earth and what do we have in the book of Acts?

we have a record of Jesus' ongoing ministry from heaven through his apostles now it's through their sermons now it's through the signs and wonders that they are doing that the church continues to grow and expand one example to see that in Acts chapter 3 and 4 we have that story of Peter and John going up to the temple to pray and meeting the lame beggar who asks them for money and Peter turns to him and says in verse 6 of chapter 3 silver or gold I do not have but what I do have I give you in the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth walk so they are healing people in the name of Jesus Jesus is continuing his work through them and then the rest of chapter 3 and chapter 4 bring us Peter boldly testifying that Jesus is Lord he is the Christ that while they killed as he says the author of life

God raised him from the dead and they declare there's no other name by which we must be saved and so mission is about testifying that Jesus is Lord and continuing the work of Jesus how would the apostles do this ongoing work we find in the first four verses of Acts 1 four important realities first in verse 2 we're told that Jesus chose the apostles so we think about the apostles that we meet in the book of Acts they are chosen and appointed by Jesus himself in verse 3 we're told that Jesus showed himself to them and that's going to be so important for the first church because here they are qualified to bear witness they have been with Jesus all through his ministry there when he died they saw him risen they are qualified to bear witness they are qualified to write the New Testament thirdly we discover here that Jesus commissioned them verse 2 he gave instructions through the Holy Spirit to the apostles in verse 8 they're called his witnesses so by the Spirit empowered by the Spirit they would be ambassadors they would be witnesses they would take that instruction and they would live it out and fourth and very importantly Jesus promised them the Holy Spirit so in verse 4 do not leave Jerusalem but wait for the gift my father promised which you have heard me speak about so they would continue the work of Jesus once Jesus had sent the gift of the Holy Spirit which is in itself a fulfillment of Old Testament promises so we have here four specific qualifications for these first apostles how were they able to turn the world upside down because they were chosen

[19 : 26] Jesus revealed himself to them he commissioned them and he gave them the Holy Spirit but at the same time when we think about our ongoing ministry we need to recognize that in a secondary sense these things are all true of us as well if we are Christians we have been chosen by

God's grace we've been chosen by Jesus Jesus has revealed himself to us by his spirit and through the word to be our Lord and Savior and when we are followers of Jesus we are commissioned we are sent out into the world as his followers to make Jesus known and we too have the Holy Spirit we have God with us we have that power within us and we'll think a little bit more about that so here we discover Jesus the all powerful Savior and King who could have chosen any means for world mission deliberately chose the church the church is how Jesus is going to continue his work in the world and that's why we read from Acts chapter 13 because Acts chapter 13 shows us one example of how that works out in practice so here is the Antioch church and the Antioch church was hugely significant for the early missionary movement so we're introduced in the first couple of verses or the first verse to their local leadership and notice how international their leadership is there's at least someone from

North Africa there's people from very different backgrounds and they are taking the lead they are seeking God's face they are involved in worship they're seeking the Lord and as they do so they're led by the spirit to appoint Barnabas and Saul so two of their leadership are then sent to go on their missionary journeys this church is a very young church just recently established but from the beginning God's design for a local church is that it would be central to his purpose of global mission so that means one clear priority for our church and for every church is spreading the gospel to be a community in the first instance truly know Jesus we love Jesus and where we're ready to proclaim Jesus for the sake of

God's glory and we'll also support others in different ways who are doing likewise in different parts from us so the church on mission continues the work of Jesus and perhaps it's important for us to ask well how can you how can I support global mission here's four ways that we can certainly do that and there are more one we support global mission when we speak to spread the gospel locally when we are obedient where we are sharing the hope of Christ where we are secondly when we pray for the spread of the gospel because we believe that just as much as it was God's design to use the church for mission we also know that it was God's design to use prayer for mission and his kingdom and so we'll do that at the end of our service we can also give for the spread of the gospel that was one reason why we decided to establish our mission support fund we wanted to put this principle into practice to give us a weekly opportunity to be supporting the church plant in Galashios and to support the Reannels in Colombia but we can give to support mission agencies and organizations involved in different works and we can go for the spread of the gospel all of us in a sense are called to be on a journey as missionaries but that journey will be different for all of us for some of us maybe that will just take us across a room to be sharing our faith within the context of our family perhaps it will take us across the city and we'll be called to live as Christians in a workplace and maybe that's our particular challenge some of us will maybe be called to take the gospel across the globe and we need to be ready to hear and to respond in faith and obedience why because of Jesus Jesus has arisen from death saviour there is no other name by which a person can be saved other than through the person and work of Jesus so the church on mission continues the work of

Jesus secondly the church on mission depends on the Holy Spirit verses 4 and 5 of Acts chapter 1 and then verse 8 bear that out so again to read verse 8 you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth to read verses 4 and 5 and verse 8 you realize the same truths are brought together Jesus promises he's going to continue to build his church and he's going to do that through his disciples and he's going to do it by his spirit and we need to remember that it's crucial to mission it's crucial to our Christian lives the work of the Holy Spirit to think about Jesus and his own ministry you know his baptism of course was the beginning of his public ministry and what happens as he was about to begin his public ministry the spirit descended on him like a dove

[25 : 08] Jesus is the spirit filled man and the book of Acts and the history of the church represents Jesus ongoing ministry mission is his work done in his power Jesus working in and through us by the promised Holy Spirit we saw a different aspect of that in Acts chapter 13 the spirit leading them in mission so as the church prayed as they were seeking God's wisdom and direction the spirit led them to commission to in particular Barnabas and Saul to go for Christ into the wider Roman empire and it's amazing to read through the missionary journeys of Paul and to recognize how much he was led and directed by the spirit so one great example let me read Acts chapter 16 you can turn there verses 6 to 10 we read there Paul and his companions traveled throughout the region of

Phrygia and Galatia having been kept by the Holy

Spirit from preaching the word in the province of Asia so they wanted to go into Asia but the spirit said no and so they went elsewhere when they came to the border of Mysia they tried to enter Bithynia but the spirit of Jesus would not allow them to so they've been really sensitive to the leading and guiding of the spirit and perhaps we're asking why in the world would the spirit tell them not to go and speak of Jesus perhaps they were asking that we don't know but we do know that they passed by Mysia and went down to Troas during during the night Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia standing and begging him come over to Macedonia and help us after Paul had seen the vision we got ready at once to leave for Macedonia concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them and what we find after that is that Lydia has converted the Philippian jailer is very dramatically converted the church in Philippi has its beginning and that was the spirit's design for that time in Paul's missionary journeys and so the spirit was leading and directing and to broaden that and move that away from just

Paul's missionary journeys and Paul the apostle we need to recognize that whenever Jesus through his spirit is giving his people power to do his work in the world it's a spiritual gift that's why God gives us those spiritual gifts so that we can work for him in the world to make Jesus known and so it's absolutely fundamental that we are depending on the Holy Spirit now three ways and there are more but three ways at least that we are called to depend on the Holy Spirit when we think in the context of mission and let's think about our Bibles and we are called to believe that the Bible has been inspired by the Spirit that this is the one message that people need to hear and we also believe that it's the Spirit who gives us understanding of that word and it's the Spirit that will give someone else the understanding of the word so they're able to understand their sin and their need and

Jesus as Savior one of the things that's so important about the ministry of the Spirit what did the Spirit delight to do the Spirit delights to glorify Jesus so if the Spirit inspired the Bible and if the Spirit loves to glorify Jesus then we should expect our Bibles to be testifying all over the place to the glory of Jesus and that's what it does and the Spirit loves to open people's eyes so they can see the glory of Jesus in his word so sharing the good news must involve the word of God and it must also involve us asking the Spirit to help open hearts and minds to the truth to help us if we want to communicate it to help the person that we want to speak to so we need to rely and depend on the Holy Spirit when it comes to the Bible and our sharing of it also when we think about our conversations we're called to depend on the Holy

Spirit even in the context of our conversations Jesus said to his disciples slightly different context where they were going to face persecution and opposition and Jesus said to them don't worry the Spirit will teach you in that moment what you are to say and there's a really important reminder there for us that we should be alert to the opportunities that we're being given and we be trusting the Spirit to guide conversations to guide our words to trust the Spirit for those divine appointments those meetings that God has already planned for us I remember years ago I can't remember who the missionary was but reading of one missionary who in a fairly rural context had to go to the market every day for their supplies and then go on to their work now you can imagine having a constant to-do list you might want to bash on and get it done but this wise missionary added at least 10 minutes to those market trips to have that margin for any conversations that might come up giving herself the space to speak to people to engage them on questions of faith so

[30 : 42] Bible conversation and the third one where we depend on the Holy Spirit is of course in the context of prayer and we thought about this not that long ago prayer is the engine room mission and the spirit helps us as we pray it was William Carey and I really like the image I'm going to share it again it was William Carey the famous missionary to India who said to his friends I will go down the mine by which he meant I will go to do the hard work of mission with all its sacrifice I will go down the mine if you will hold the ropes prayer is taking the strain to support ministers missionaries pastors and teachers as they go to share the good news of Jesus will we take the strain depending on the spirit praying for missionaries that we know and missionaries that we don't know places that we are familiar with places we're not familiar with and lastly the church on mission bears witness to

Jesus and that's there in chapter 1 verse 8 you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and all Judea and Samaria and to the ends of the earth it's been recognized that Jesus had what sometimes called a catch and release strategy with his disciples by which it meant that he brought them in and they spent considerable amounts of time with him to listen to watch to learn to help him in ministry but

then he sent them out and we read that in Luke's gospel sending them out two by two to preach to announce and show the kingdom was near and so here in Acts 1 we find Jesus one last time gathering the disciples to himself before he returns to heaven and he gathers them before sending them out as witnesses to the world and even here in this last time on this earth that they would be gathered together he has there are really important realities for them to learn about the Lord Jesus that will really help them and would help us in mission as well so one thing is a necessary correction for them so in verses 6 and 7 we had their question Lord are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel they're thinking well now that Jesus has risen from the dead well surely the kingdom is now and they also the kingdom must be the kingdom is unknown and he tells them there'll be witnesses to the ends of the year reminding them the church will be much bigger than you think the kingdom will be full of people who will take you by surprise their mission was to the ends of the earth and that's what we see in the book of

Acts the message of the apostles to the world that God sent Jesus and Jesus by the deliberate plan of God died for you and is alive for you and he invited the apostles invited people to be saved and to know God's grace whoever they were as they began to recognize God's plan had always been to bring blessing to the nations so they were being reminded by Jesus that he is a global king and all the people should praise him but then there's also the message from the angels in verse 11 reminding them that Jesus is also the returning king so important for them as they saw him depart men of Galilee why do you stand here looking into the sky this same Jesus who's been taken from you into heaven will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven while the book of Luke records the first coming of

Jesus and we see much of the weakness and humility of Jesus the servant king there is a reminder to the disciples here from the angels that his second coming will be marked by glory by him coming and his power and he'll be recognized as the universal king and so to think about those realities here is the global king here is the returning king that helps us to think about our motives for mission there's need there there's urgency people need to be ready and they need to know their savior but there's also the motive of glory he is the universal king and he needs to be recognized and honored as such but it also reminds us of the global scale of mission Jesus is good news for all he is lord over all therefore there is a mission for all to read the message of acts and to think about the experience of the apostles is to be reminded that

[36 : 00] Jesus doesn't save people and then beam us up or translate us immediately up to heaven that was never his design nor is it the design for his church that we coast our way into the kingdom of heaven rather to look at how Jesus by the spirit used the apostles we discover that we as Christians us as a local church we've been created for mission that God might receive glory we've been given our marching orders in that sense and so it becomes vital for us then to be obedient to where God has placed us and to how God calls us with the gift that God has given us and the opportunities that God sets before us and that's true both for the sake of this city where the vast majority of people in this city do not worship do not bow their knee to Jesus and it's true for the 3.29 billion people who are as yet entirely unreached with the gospel so the book of

Acts helps us to see that a healthy church continues the work of Jesus depending on the Holy Spirit and bearing witness to Jesus as Lord now let's pray about that now let's pray Father God we do thank you that Jesus continued and continues his work of building his kingdom often we are amazed that Jesus chose to use local churches and people like us in order to achieve that great end but we know from your word that that is your primary means for global mission the local church empowered by the Spirit and so Lord we pray that you would cause us to desire to see you glorified and honoured among the nations and in this nation we pray that you would open our eyes and our hearts to see the great spiritual need that is all around us and it's all around the world that you would give us a willingness to be sacrificial in our time in our money with our energy in our prayers that we would be engaged in global mission however you would call us to

Lord we do pray to be a church that would be active supporters of mission again we commit to you the Reannos and their work in Colombia and we pray for Manuel in his teaching and counselling and pastoring Lord give him all wisdom and grace and Lord we pray too for the proposed church plant in Galashios Lord that you would prosper it that there would be a strong gospel witness down there in the Scottish borders so Lord we ask that you would apply this truth to us and that you would help us to pray help us to pray as a church thank you for our prayer resources for this month and beyond Lord that we would be renewed in our desire to see you be glorified in our lives and in the

lives of the people around us and we would seek to be faithful in the work of mission we pray in Jesus name Amen so what we're going to do just now is we're going to sing one of those great hymns that remind us of the missionary task facing a task unfinished and then I'll close up and for folks that need to go you can go and then perhaps we'll just break into small groups I've got a couple of slides about unreached people that we'll look at after that so let's stand and let's sing facing a task unfinished