

Mission Sunday - Martin Paterson

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Preacher: Martin Paterson

[0 : 0 0] Good evening again everyone. Hi. I guess people don't say good evening.

Really great to be back with everyone this evening. Thank you for having us as a family through today. I just want to say to you guys it's such a blessing getting the chance to spend time with James and Vicky and the boys this afternoon.

It's so great getting to spend time with like-minded brothers and sisters and being encouraged by them. So I just want to say to you guys continue to.

I know you do but continue to pray for them and all that they're doing because the Lord is at work in what it is that they are doing. Just to give you a little bit of an update or a picture for you if you've never met me my name's Martin and my family are currently sitting through the back and Jennifer is looking after the little kids getting them into the pajamas etc.

But we are getting ready to leave Scotland and serve in Vietnam Lord willing later this summer. And much like Carl and son we hope that by July or the summertime of 2022 we'll be able to leave where we are based right now to be involved in ministry.

[1 : 1 9] And it will be in a similar context not the same nation or same city but in a city based at a theological education establishment in the city of Hanoi.

Our hope is that after a few years of language and cultural learning we'll be able to slot in, fit in with this really important and essential ministry for any church throughout the world which is the equipping, the journeying alongside of those who will be the pastors those who will be the evangelists the church workers the next generation or sometimes even the first generation of pioneer cross-cultural missionaries themselves.

We're really excited by this and really looking forward to doing it but are also aware that it is going to be a huge challenge a lot of changes and will come with multiple ups and downs along the way.

the kids, if Jennifer was here one of the things we would invite you guys to pray for is for our kids that they would make that transition well to moving out to Vietnam later this year and that in the years to come they wouldn't turn round to their parents and say see that God that you worship that moved us away from everything we want to hear them say see that God that we worship he is good he is glorious and we are so grateful that you moved with what he called you to do so would you pray that for our kids that they would grow to know Jesus more through this transition and would not have that sort of resistance that comes sometimes with moving cross-culturally.

To give you a bit of a picture about what we do at present Jennifer looks after the kids and right now what I do is serve the denomination I've been seconded from the organisation that we serve with and that we'll be going to Asia with and I get to work alongside the mission board of the denomination and particularly helping to coordinate and focus on some of the global ministry activity for the churches throughout Scotland that the Free Church has and part of the family and getting alongside local churches like yourselves doing things like this advising people about what it might mean to be a sending church how to support people well and also to just walk alongside some people who are thinking through a cross-cultural mission and ministry for the future.

[3 : 42] It's an excellent time to be able to do this and I'm so grateful to the Lord for the chance and the opportunity to serve our family of churches across Scotland in this way. In a couple of weeks' time I'll also be covering for your own dear brother Daniel as he takes some time to finish up his PhD writing I'm going to be covering for him at ETS so please do pray for me as I take up that new venture and for all the blessed students that have got the great opportunity to learn from someone who is also learning on the job please pray for them as well in that.

If you want to find out any more about what we're doing at present and also what we're going to do in the future, God willing then please do just come and chat to me afterwards. I know that I have got a nice loud voice but trust me I'm not actually that scary I'm like a big teddy bear sometimes okay?

Happy to come and chat to you at the end please do come and speak to us. We're going to hear now from the Bible that's far better than listening to me so can I invite you to turn to 3 John and we'll spend some time thinking about this little letter and as you turn there I'll pray and I'll get these up and running.

Father the call to your mission is not something we can instigate in ourselves it is not rooted in our clever ideas or our amazing strategies because in many ways Father what we think is clever and amazing ultimately before you is nothing.

it comes from your heart out of a desire to see your son made much of amongst all the peoples and languages that exist throughout your world and as we think now about what it means for us as your people to engage in your mission my prayer for all of us is that this these moments this time would be an opportunity for us to take seriously what you say to us and our responsibility as your people as we partner together with your people throughout the world taking the message of Jesus to those who do not yet know his name do not let us leave here the same as when we came Spirit of God teach us from your word for we are gathered here as your servants to listen Amen Now this morning in one sense is the sort of here is the vision this is why we do what we do

[6 : 26] God is great God is glorious and he deserves and demands glory from all that he has made that's brilliant but the first question I ask the guy at the front who says that is this Super how does that happen?

It's great you give me this amazing big picture how on earth do you get to the point where these things kind of fall into place to see that great picture become a reality?

That would be my question anyway I don't know if that's your question you're going with my question tonight what are some of the practicalities? I think that this little letter 3 John which we can skip over very quickly and we might not even realise is there has actually got some really really helpful practical points for us to touch on as we begin to think through what gospel partnership looks like and our role and responsibility as the people of God in that now to the coming of Christ there will be the need for the church to globally send workers throughout the world the global church will need to send people throughout the world to proclaim and announce the gospel of the kingdom of Jesus Jesus is clear about this in many places throughout the gospels he asks people to go and make disciples that's the big text we all know Matthew 28 you to go and to make disciples of all the nations he says we're to pray for labourers to be raised up and sent out into the harvest fields and he also says guys do you not see that the fields are ripe to harvest but when we are faced with challenging circumstances which I think we are when we are faced with these challenging circumstances each of us in some way or other has a tendency to at a greater or lesser extent to pull back look inward and drop off the radar when it comes to the spiritual realities of life and the world in which we have been placed instead of focusing on what is truly important our heads and our hearts can entertain thoughts of delusional fantasy avenues of proud self-interest or misplaced fears and through maybe a combination of those different things and many more we begin to become detached from that bigger vision we thought about this morning and it begins to suffocate and choke out that great purpose

God has for his people it's in these moments of great challenge that we need to regain our senses and recognise once again the main and the plain things of scripture and one of those main things is the necessity of global evangelism in a chaotic world making Jesus known in a world which wants to reject him and in a world which is in constant flux Christ is to be known and loved and treasured he is to be believed in throughout the world but how does that happen in these sorts of challenging circumstances well let's turn to this letter because I think there is a wonderful example in such a predicament because I think in here we see genuine gospel partnership in challenging circumstances but before we look at the specifics of this little postcard letter we need to have some awareness of what's going on 1 to 3

John those letters right at the end of the New Testament these three letters are written by the wise old apostle the wise old disciple of Jesus John and they probably come near the end of the first century persecution and opposition is kind of on the upward trend at this point there was a degree to which authorities sought people throughout the empire to show allegiance to different forms of imperial worship and if you did not do that your material prosperity would have gone a downward trajectory this is the backdrop that you see to the seven churches in Revelation chapter 2 and 3 and it makes sense that these are all written at roughly the same sort of time period in history things are not easy for believers in the Roman world at this point in time you've also got to add into the mixer not only have you got opposing forces on the outside you also have challenging people on the inside throw this person into the mixer deotrophies false teacher infiltrating the local church it'd be fair to say that you wouldn't want to have his cv he's not exactly the sort of person that you want to imitate is it i've written something to the church but deotrophies verse 9 who likes to put himself first does not acknowledge our authority so if i come i will bring up what he is doing talking wicked nonsense against us and not content with that he refuses to welcome the brothers and also stops those who want to and puts them out of the church he seems like a great guy doesn't he model yourself on him i don't think that's what john is saying if you want to get a real picture as to probably what is happening and the false teaching that's taking place flick back over to 2 john chapter chapter to verse 7 he talks about many deceivers having gone out into the world and here is their false teaching those who confess the coming or those who do not confess the coming of jesus christ in the flesh that's the doctrine that's being put forward by some of these false teachers is it diatrophies maybe possibly but it is not exactly a good thing they don't believe that jesus has come as a man which by logical extension means that they fundamentally disagree with the penalty paying substitutionary atonement of god's messiah for the taking away of wrath from sinners and rebels against god it's a big thing these people ultimately are gospel haters they do not like what is central to god's revelation of salvation that in jesus christ fully god and fully man there is a atonement for sin they take away his humanity and they take away his salvation make no mistake about it john and his mission team were well aware of challenging circumstances so the next time you feel hard pressed the next time you think hey this is pretty tough maybe turn to third john and hear john saying to you i hear you brother i hear you sister it is difficult work but here's what he seems to do instead of what we would naturally do instead of turning inwards they look upwards and outwards and they rejoice in the wonderful blessing of being involved in taking the gospel of christ to the world the temptation that is set before us in the midst of these challenging circumstances as the church in scotland is to forget about the world out there and to concentrate on what is in front of us but i think that we are on good grounds to say that john his mission team and brother gaius

[14 : 00] would not have allowed these things to become the constraints they would have not taken on these blinkers so easily they were captivated by this central vision of scripture that big vision of god god deserving and demanding to be glorified and worshipped by all that he has made and so in this very personal letter we get a glimpse at some of the most important aspects of genuine gospel partnership in really difficult challenging circumstances now with those things said with those thoughts put in place i'm going to give us another three set of headings which will hopefully allow us to work our way through here and really we're going to do the first few verses probably the first eight that's where we're going to be spending our time picking on a couple maybe later through but what i want us to look at is this first of all what is true should set the agenda what is true sets the agenda in forming gospel partnerships second thing who we send and partner with matters who we send and partner with matters and how we send and partner must honor god so those are the three things we're going to notice when we go through this and let's crack on and press through we see that first then don't we the what is true sets the agenda popular opinion culturally or even theologically should not be the defining marker of what we do that should just never be the defining marker of what we do what we should be doing is coming back to god's word time after time and not allowing people like diatrophies or modern day equivalents tell us this is what the big agenda is we should be coming back to what it is that god has said remembering what it is that god has done and accomplished in christ jesus through and and that message of the gospel rather than taking in our culture and false teaching the gospel truth should set the agenda look at how john speaks about gaius gaius is a brother you see in those first few verses who clearly is a man of truth he loves christ he loves christ's people he loves to be a jesus follower he loves to be a disciple of jesus their friendship john and gaius's friendship is founded on the truth of the gospel you see that in verse one he loves gaius in the truth what's more gaius was no charlatan he walked what he talked look at verses three and four i rejoice greatly when the brothers came and testified to your truth and indeed you are walking in the truth i have no greater joy than to hear that my children are walking in the truth you know what gaius believed he did he put his faith into action he lived what he believed and there is a very clear way that we can see this gaius was invested in seeing the work of the gospel among the peoples of the world flourish how do we know this we can see that in the way that he welcomed in john's mission team a group of potential strangers that he may not have known and he serves them well why why would you do that people are annoying do you know that i know i am and then these random people just turn up in the city that you're part of and you know they need somewhere to stay and they need somewhere to eat and it's a bit cold outside and they need some heat and all the rest of these things and what does gaius say oh no in fact actually if you had emailed ahead in order to be able to schedule when it is that you could do he didn't do that obviously because emails weren't

there he said come on in we'll sort you out we'll look after you because you love jesus i'm on board with people who love jesus let's do this see that verse 7 first half of don't you they've gone out for the sake of the name accepting nothing these people um have come out with a specific task to tell others about jesus so we know that these people love jesus we know that gaius clearly loves jesus and so they come together and they say right let's make this work gaius lived in challenging times but his context did not distract him from ultimately what was true people needed to hear about christ so he served in such a way to allow that to happen want us to notice a very important detail about global mission in the local church gaius's conviction about the truth of the gospel was the rhythm setting the agenda of his life not just his spare time his life and it led him to recognize the normality of global gospel ministry his conviction about the truth meant that he saw global gospel ministry as a normal part of the christian life but all too often there is an incorrect vision that we touched on this morning where you have an elite few of people set aside for a task or an obsessive minority of people who just get really excited about all this overseas stuff again i want to say really clearly tonight i don't think that's what the bible actually teaches us to be people who love jesus christ is to be people who love his glory his honor his value his worth wherever we're placed and where that is not known and true we desire that that would be known and true friends what john says about gaius shows us this he says gaius is faithful what you're doing is a faithful thing verse five it is a faithful thing you do in all your efforts for these brothers strangers though they are because gaius loves christ the circumstances don't define his response he serves freely in order that god would be glorified okay so our circumstances could be challenging let me make it a little bit more encouraging for you tonight as you sit here in edinburgh about six o'clock what happens if they get more challenging what happens if it becomes more difficult what happens if there is increased opposition what happens if things don't seem to reverse and there is an upward trend will we still serve in the coming months and years who knows where our culture will go in scotland if things do get more challenging and more difficult will we be so committed to global ministry and see it as a normal part of life all the pressures and the challenges as it brings will we see sending people out to other parts of scotland for ministry as something that is just a normal aspect of a healthy church or will we want to keep a hold of those who are our best and our brightest because well we don't really want them to leave here because that would mean that we would we would find it hard let's not become play-doh in the hands of our context allowing external pressures to force us and change us instead let our convictions

concerning the truth that god has laid out in his eternal word set our agenda that until jesus returns the church must engage in this ministry throughout the world for his glory here's a question for your own reflection your own time have you allowed the scope of god's purposes in his word to shape your understanding of his work in his world this is the point that i would point you to brother brother gaius i love guys like this in the new testament gaius a guy we don't really know tons about him but he's someone who loved jesus and allowed what he knew about jesus to shape his life let what is true set your agenda and you will see each of us has a role to play in the gospel going forward and then those partnerships those healthy partnerships and challenging times grow flourish and develop for the glory of god second then who we send and partner with really matters i mean you could have lots of people come to you and say i believe this is where the lord is asking me to go to and through a little bit of probing about this thing that thing or the next that might not be the case who we send really matters who we partner with really matters gaius's church most likely had received suspect teachers in the past um listen to deutrophies in the midst what we know for sure is that this man deutrophies is not a particularly pleasant character he is self-absorbed he is self-appointed and he is a charlatan who is ruling the church by force of his overbearing personality as i've already said we do not want to aim to be like this guy this is where i need to stop and make a really serious and important point if ministry in the gospel is what it is that god is leading you to you do not follow the pattern of this man if you have an aspiration to be involved in ministry or leadership in scotland or in other parts of the world do not be like him because it kills gospel witness it destroys and tears up churches and it ultimately does not lead or point people to the living christ don't be that guy don't follow his example listen up to what john does point out about a healthy gospel ministry and partnership and i just want to point out a couple of things here have you noticed the importance of the church in this small letter the church are very important in this concept of of of sending of of being involved in partnerships this isn't transfer deadline day with lots of free agents and people are just going oh well we just need to get somebody to fill this position somewhere because well we just need someone to come through the door that's that's not what we seem to see happening here these brothers who were sent out by john have accountability in their church setting they are not lone rangers going and doing whatever they feel like did you see that in verse six let's read verse five through six beloved it's a faithful thing that you do in all your efforts for these brothers strangers that they are who testified to your love before the church so what john is painting a picture here is these brothers have gone to gaius and they have returned to him and they have said to the church with john present that these people have done this for them so they've not just gone out and done their own thing they've gone out they've done what it was they were appointed to and they've come back to the church they're not out doing things by themselves this is a clear sign of accountability they are not lone rangers this is a ministry partnership

and especially if people are going to be serving and partnering at a distance we need to be really clear about who it is that we are partnering with as a church so here is what i would leave for you guys to think through consider and to embrace partner with and raise up people who love the church to serve in mission with you not people who want to raise up their own flag and raise up their own empire but people who genuinely for the zeal and glory of jesus would love to see his bride flourish in places where it does not exist raise those sorts of people up and partner with those sorts of people like craig who has a genuine heart's desire to see christ exalted in the borders of scotland second then did you notice their purpose in the first century world many of the major cities were interconnected and the people could travel there for work and study restrictions aside i think that's been a normal pattern of life over the past 20 to 30 years increased travel increased economic connectivity which leads to global jobs and different education options that people can access in different cities it's been upscaled in our generation and people who live nearby to global cities like edinburgh will travel to parts of the u.s or people from other parts of the world will move to somewhere like edinburgh for the university or for their work but that's not what you see happening here this isn't just because these guys are moving to another part of the world because of their work or education or something like that what we hear is that these brothers have been sent out with a purpose they are not moving for work or study they have a specific role and a specific purpose they have been sent out they have been sent out for the sake of the name you see that verse 7 these brothers have gone out for the sake of the name what does that mean?

surely it's got something to do with announcing and proclaiming Jesus we need to realise that this purpose can be warped by human sinfulness people can be sent out and in the western church there can exist sometimes sadly a saviour complex which becomes justified by being sent out for the name when in reality it becomes making a name for myself i'm just at a distance and people can't hold me accountable and i can do what i want i can say what i want and no one will know any different and that is not what John has in mind here at all in this gospel partnership and that is not how these believers acted these brothers didn't care about their own name and maybe surprisingly we are not told that they were concerned about the need which existed you don't see that in this letter at all they are not being concerned about the need they have a concern about his name the main thing which reverberates throughout scripture is not look at the need which exists out there it is hallowed be your name among all the peoples that exist there are a thousand and one needs that exist in the world but if our only purpose is to go and to meet those needs which exist in God's world and not about the fame of the name of Christ realistically we are going to burn out very quickly and possibly we may have missed the point of it all together this isn't about name makers or fame takers this is about obedience for the sake of the name to be sent out for Christ's name much as i did a minute ago here is something to reflect on for yourself as a church here is what i would long for that you would partner with and raise up people like these brothers who did not care about their own fame at all one jot they cared about the name of Jesus Christ because to them to live was Christ and to die was gain they were willing to count the cost because they knew that treasuring Christ was more than life raise up and partner with people like that let's finish up because how we send not just who we send and partner with how we send and partner must be something which honors God and we can see that how we send and partner must be something that honors God and John says that really specifically even in the challenging circumstances which he faced what does that mean from this letter it seems clear to me that the churches must be working in cooperation with the mission team and with the other churches that are involved it is to be an outpouring of lavish generosity an outpouring of lavish generosity you see that

[31 : 39] I think in verse 6 and verse 8 they testified to your love before the church you will do well to send them on their journey in a manner worthy of God skip down a verse we ought to support people like these they've not accepted anything from the Gentiles that we may be fellow workers for the truth we've already seen that first aspect these churches were seeking to work together they sent people backwards and forwards by the looks of it Gaius served the brothers the brothers served their home church and John served Gaius it's his dear beloved friend that he wants to encourage in a difficult situation they worked in union they worked united oh man imagine the church of Jesus worked in unity imagine that we actually worked together in unity for the gospel of Christ to go through the world and not put up some things which become blocks and stumbling stones on the road being sent into the world for the sake of the name was not something that they did in isolation as one church they worked in partnership and it was a beautiful way to show that interdependence which we have as the body of Jesus Christ what's more

I would argue and love the fact that within our Presbyterian church history this is just something that we should do naturally normally and everyday we love to serve together as the body of Jesus Christ where the strong help the weak and the weak love the strong because they work in partnership to see Christ glorified we desire to serve for the gospel in Scotland and to the ends of the earth sending out people in cooperation with each other to see God's mission become an increasing reality and in so doing it turns out we are blessed we have deepened relationships and that is something which can only be honouring to God but we can also see that this sort of action is a responsibility for those cooperating churches these brothers were sent out for the sake of the name they were accepting nothing from the Gentiles verse 7 tells us and I think that that is another way of saying they are not taking anything from non-believers they are not relying on those who are outside of the household of faith and that means that each of us have been given a responsibility to come alongside such people who have been sent out and identified by the church to be involved in taking the name of Jesus to other parts of the country or other parts of the world and seeing that their need not their want that their need is met in order for ministry to continue look at what John says we should support people like these verse 8 remember

John's underlying conviction we saw that earlier we read it didn't we that these verse 6 these ones should be sent on their journey in a manner which is worthy of God I don't know about you but I read a statement like that and I'm like right well how does God send if we are to send people in a manner worthy of God how is it that God sends in some ways reading John 3 wouldn't have been a bad thing because God gave his one and only son that whoever would believe in him would not perish but would have everlasting life when God sends God sends lavishly God sends abundantly God sends graciously and full of love he sends for the good of many people he sends for his glory to be known this is the sort of sending and partnership that we are called to we are not

God and ultimately we can never send in that full sense but we're to be sent in a manner which is worthy of our father in heaven to be exalted and known and remember John is not saying this from an ivory tower detached from reality he's saying this with a man who's in this church who's a false teacher in a context where people are opposing the spread of the gospel in the surrounding culture and context on the backdrop of such a dark situation filled with thoughts of self-preservation and self fulfillment the church of Jesus Christ in Scotland I would argue has the opportunity to say we want to give everything to Christ because he is worthy of everything that I have because his glory is better than life and so the brothers and the sisters that have been raised up by him to go to places like

Galashiels to go to places like Bangkok to go to the north of Scotland to go to all sorts of places even my wonderful home city of Glasgow we will give it all so that Christ would be worshipped and adored through the ministry God has given to those people friends challenging circumstances are going to exist until the day of Christ's coming and return to see many more peoples and places come to join with us in worshipping God well that is going to require our obedience to the truth it is going to require us as the church partnering with gospel saturated Christ loving disciples and having a unified desire as his people to glorify Christ in the world and here's what my note says at the end of that because I feel that that is a huge huge responsibility which I am not worthy of Lord

[37 : 58] Jesus make me a man like that make us a people like that captivated by you once again let me pray father all that we have has been given by your gracious hand and so once again as your people we would come to you this evening and say please take my life I give it to you and I pray that you would use it for whichever purpose you desire so that your son may be exalted that a lost world may hear of his grace and of his coming and that when I take my last breath

I will know that I have lived according to your truth according to your purposes joyfully giving over everything so that your son may be exalted and that I may become low make us people like that because really we don't want to be help us to move away from the concept of building our own kingdoms and our own empires and grant us the great and wonderful gift of humility to take step after step with King Jesus Amen to a giving gospel an re