

Praying for global impact

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Date: 06 May 2012

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[0 : 00] I'm thinking what a privilege it is for me to have the best job in the church, to be the ministering in charge of mission, and to have a whole month. Like, we don't have a month of membership.

We could, but we're not. But we got a whole month of global missions. So, wow, you know, that's pretty privileged. And as I sought to argue in that video, that mission, a global mission, is a gospel imperative.

I urge you, if you're not convinced, to check it out, even if you were convinced, to check it out in Luke 24. Luke 24. So the context is post-resurrection, and Jesus was explaining to his disciples what just happened and the meaning of it.

And he kind of said, well, you should know this because the Old Testament has taught you this, that the Christ must die, the Christ must rise, and repentance of faith must be preached to all the nations in the name of Jesus.

So global mission, gospel imperatives. And again, you know, just to reiterate, there are lots of things we can do without. Okay? And we still have the Christian faith, Christianity, and you can still be a Christian.

[1 : 19] We don't need this building. Okay? Unless it rains. Christianity, we don't need this building to, you know. We don't, God forbid, need a parish council.

If that disappears tomorrow, there's still Christianity. You don't even need the ministers. It's quite amazing. We're not Roman Catholics. We could all get, you know, the staff could die tomorrow or horrible disease, and you could still be Christians.

That's one of them. But you can't do without the death of Jesus, the resurrection of Jesus, and the mission, global mission, to proclaim.

What do I mean by mission? I simply mean the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of God. It is as simple as that. It is telling people about Jesus who's king of the kingdom.

So mission. Simple enough. What do we mean by global mission? Global mission. And that's quite easy. Global means the world. Okay?

[2 : 25] Global mission involves preaching Jesus to all the world. And I'm slowly coming to the conviction that global mission is not just going from here to there.

I think that the world has changed, has moved on, that the here and the there sort of distinction is no longer valid. So if I can so tentatively and nervously suggest, perhaps we should change local and global impact to just global impact.

Just to help us to see that what we do here is part of what's happening in the whole world. I think nowadays, everyone goes from everywhere to everywhere.

What is, I think, most challenging in the task of mission is crossing barriers, crossing cultural barriers to different parts of the world, perhaps to different type of people, even in this part of the world.

I don't know whether you're convinced of this, but ironically, I think globalisation and technology are both making us even more homogenous.

[3 : 49] You know, on Facebook, you might think, wow, I've got a million friends, but most of them are people just like you and me.

Well, maybe, no, I don't know. But technology is making us into sort of siloing with people just like us. In fact, increasingly, I look at churches around in Sydney, we are becoming more homogenous than ever before.

You might look, oh, you know, no, no, that's not true. There's Chinese people and non-Chinese people and whatever. But at some level, no, actually, we're all pretty similar. We all live in the North Shore.

We have sort of vaguely similar sort of values. They're not sort of, you know, really crazy people in our church, except for Josh. You know, but he's an exception.

But he's from Canada. You know, it's... We... There was a book that I was reading that was kind of saying that it makes a hard...

[4 : 55] Like, we actually lost the skill of relating to people who are just different to us. We don't know how to talk to them. We don't know how to disagree with them. We just give up, you know.

They are not our Facebook friends. And we just stick with people that we can talk to, that we can agree with. And church becomes a... And this is why I think in global mission, the biggest challenge to us is to cross those barriers, to take Jesus to people who are just different to us.

And that's what we're talking about. And it is imperative. It is not an optional extra. For those of us sitting here in the North Shore today, we need to be taking Jesus to people not in the North Shore.

Why aren't we running missions in Mount Druid? Why are we doing that? Why aren't we... I don't know. Like, it's not an... We need to take Jesus to all those people.

And we'll be looking at different elements of this global mission in the course of the next few weeks. But this week, just three things. I want to focus your attention on the passage that we're looking at tonight.

[6 : 10] The first thing that I would say is the context of the passage is very different to our own. I want to say this because just in case you're really naughty and you go beyond chapter 9 into chapter 10, and you actually see Jesus sending off his disciples, and he makes sort of funny statements and saying, don't...

Whatever you do, like, go on this mission, don't go to the Samaritans, and don't go to the Gentiles. Right? And you might think, well, what's going on there? Can I just ignore that part?

Or how can we be consistently saying global mission means evangelising everyone when Jesus... Well, it's a different context. It's a different salvation historical context.

The Bible itself explains it. There is a plan at play. The Jews, the people of Israel, is a beneficiary of the gospel, of the work of the Messiah first, and then the rest of us.

So there is a priority in the plan. And Matthew 9 and 10 is kind of like an expression of that. The plan is still continuing and therefore is still relevant to us.

[7 : 26] So I want to point out approximately four things out of the passage that we're reading. If you go to the passage, Matthew 9, verse 35. Sorry, let me call up.

35. Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

It's a summary statement of what Jesus has been doing. If you look at chapter 8, chapter 9, all of it, you'll find that Jesus is doing exactly what that statement says.

He's going around preaching and he's going around healing. He might, you know, he's rather restrictive. Surely he was doing more than just preaching and healing.

Surely he was eating and chatting to people, going to part. But no, no, no. The two activities which Matthew focused on are these two. Preaching the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease.

[8 : 32] Well, preaching. It tells us something about the central core of Christianity. The core of Christianity, the central message of Christianity is not be a good person.

Okay? And if that is what you think, I want you to throw that away. Okay? The central message of the Bible of Christianity is not be a good person.

Nor is it come and join a religion. In a sense. It's not, that is not, the message, the central core of the message of the Christianity is a warning. A warning.

It is like a sign on a highway. If you're on your L's, you dread to see the sign because it says, wrong way, go back.

Okay? That, that is the message of Jesus. Matthew chapter 4, 17. Jesus says, repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. Repent.

[9 : 35] Wrong way, go the other way. Turn, turn around. Why? Because the kingdom of heaven is near. Because, if you keep going the way that you do, you will have a head-on collision with God.

And when his kingdom comes, his judgment comes to destroy evil and wickedness and rebellion. And you are heading, and you are heading face-to-face on a head-on collision with God.

So, wrong way, go back. Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is near. The core of the Christian man. Secondly, we are told that Jesus was healing every sickness and disease.

And if you go back to chapter 9, chapter 8, what do you see? Well, chapter 9, verse 1, Jesus healed a paralytic man.

He forgave his sins. Chapter 9, verse 18, there was a dead girl, and Jesus gave life back to her. In the same little passage, we read of Jesus healing a woman who's been bleeding for 12 years.

[10 : 49] Verse 27, Jesus overcomes an evil spirit and gives sight and speech back to a man. What's that about?

It is about the world that we live in. What is the world like that is not the kingdom of God? Where God is not, as it were, ruling in an absolute sense.

Where we are ruling. Well, that is the world that we live in. And it is a world that is broken and cursed. Long enough, we all experience it.

It is a world of sickness and disease and tragedy and war and injustice and self-serving ambition.

And above all, it is a world of death. Jesus has come to preach the news that God's kingdom is coming.

[11 : 47] And what he does is he demonstrates what that kingdom is like. And so he went to the towns and villages to heal every sickness and disease.

He freed people from evil and oppression. He gave life where there is death. He has come to bring a foretaste of the kingdom of heaven where the good rule of God reigns supreme.

So 35, verse 35, is a summary statement of the work of Jesus. Jesus has come into the world to do that. Well, what's that to do with our mission?

Well, there are three things to note. Firstly, the motivation of mission. Come with me to have a look at verse 36. So a summary statement of what Jesus has done.

36, when he saw the crowds, that is, as he went around to the towns and the villages and he saw the people, what did he see? He had compassion on them because they were harassed and helpless like sheep without a shepherd.

[12 : 56] The motivation for mission. We have inherited this idea of God from the 19th century. It's called deism, for those of you who are interested in this.

This idea of God is, we look at the world around us and it's a wonderful, complex place. It's a complex machine like a supercomputer, right, with all the little bits and, and what we do in science is that we discover the intricacies of the world and, and God is this genius who kind of built this amazing computer, computer in his backyard.

You know, he's that clever. But the thing about this genius, inventor God is that he's both blind and indifferent. You know, he's built this machine, he flipped the switch, and the machine just, you know, it just churns.

It runs his routines and sometimes things happens in a routine and, you know, he's, and he doesn't do anything about it. He's blind to whatever happens to it.

You know, when tragedy strikes in our life, you know, there's a terrible car accident that takes away the life of somebody who cares about, the inventor, God, can't see it.

[14 : 16] That's why he's not there to do anything. He didn't do it because he's blind or he's indifferent or he can't do anything about it. It's called deism. You know, another sort of popular conception of that is God off the gaps.

You know, if we can't explain something, it must be God. Everything else we can explain, it can't be God. this is not the picture of the God of the Bible.

What happens when Jesus saw the suffering of the people? We are told in verse 36 that he was moved by compassion.

Not unmoved. Not just a God of the gaps. Not this blind, indifferent, genius, computer maker, designer person. He sees your pain He sees your trouble, He sees your suffering that you are experiencing and it breaks His heart.

And He did something about it. He sent His Son into the world to deal once and definitive of all our suffering.

[15 : 33] You know, global mission. The word mission, it comes from a Latin word, missio, which means sent. The Father sent the Son as He sees your suffering, my suffering.

And the Son has come to heal every disease and sickness, to give life where there's death, to overcome evil, to bring in to announce the kingdom of God.

God. And the first thing that we need to understand in our global mission, conception of our global mission is as followers of Jesus, we need to have the same compassion that He has.

He wanted His disciples to see that the harvest is plentiful but not enough workers to be motivated by His compassion.

I was reading this week, apparently a study was done by the University of California, Berkeley. The report of the study, if you want to look it up, is published in a journal, Social, Psychological and Personality Signs.

[16 : 52] And apparently this is the result of this study that they've done. Atheists help people because of compassion.

Right? They see a child on a TV set and they're not unmoved. This study concludes that religious people, that is people like you and me, we help people because of our doctrine, because of our communal identity and our reputational concerns.

Now, I don't know how, you know, the parameters and scopes of the study and all, but assuming that it is true for a moment, that would be awful, wouldn't it? Imagine if your parents were to treat you like that, or your boyfriend or girlfriend or your wife, you know, I noticed that you were sick, so I'm calling, but please note that I'm calling not because I care, I'm only calling because that's just something that I have to do, you know, is that so in my royal description?

And I'm calling because that's what I've been told that I have to do. Worse still, I'm only calling because that's what people at church would do as well too.

Not because I care, frankly I don't. Imagine that. Awful, wouldn't it? That is not the God of the Bible, that is not the Jesus whom we worship, Jesus cares.

[18 : 39] He sees people in need and it breaks his heart. And as followers of Jesus, we are to be like Jesus. Look around you, look at the world, look at Sydney, and see the needs of the people.

Can you see it? The lost and harassed and helpless people. We are meant to see those people and that ought to break our heart.

And mind you, not the staffing kid on TV, you know, not the sick person in the hospital.

Of course that would move us to tears. but the sinful person around you who is acting sinfully, who because of their sinfulness is offending you, who is taking advantage of you, who tramples on your values, we are to feel compassion for them.

When they behave in their self destructive way, we are to recognize that that is part of their lostness. And that ought to break our heart instead of us getting angry, getting even, putting our foot down and asserting our rights.

[20 : 13] No, when Jesus saw sinful people in their sinfulness, he had compassion. what did Jesus do when he had compassion on the crowd? What did it move him to do?

Well, eventually, to the cross to die for them and to save them. But in this particular context, what did it move him to do? Verse 38, they looked like sheep without a shepherd.

And he said to his disciples, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Therefore, 38, ask the Lord of the harvest therefore to send out workers into his harvest field.

What did it move Jesus to do? His compassion. It moves him to command his followers to pray, to ask the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.

So that's the second thing. The first is the motivation for global mission is to compassion of God. Secondly, the first thing that we do, first activity is prayer. I think when we come to global mission, if we think that it all depends on us, you know, when we see a needy person or an unrighteous person, then what we need to do is to, you know, organize ourselves and, you know, raise money, social action, change, whatever it is, the last thing that we would do is to pray.

[21 : 45] But the first thing that we need to recognize is that this is not our mission. This global mission that we speak of is not our mission.

In fact, I'm going to throw something theologically controversial out there for you. I want to suggest that St. Paul's has no mission. In fact, no church has a mission. Rather, what we have is a God who is on a mission.

Matter of semantics, yes, yes, yes, yes, yes, but important distinction. God has a mission. We don't. He invites us to take part in his mission.

It is his mission. The workers are his. The world is his. The money is his. The harvest is his. That is why Jesus, first thing, commands his followers to pray.

We may subconsciously have adopted this thinking that praying, yes, is important for mission, but it's the type of thing that you do when you can't go to Peter Marisberg.

[23 : 03] If you're a clean toss, that's where you go. If you are working and you earn a decent salary, you can give. But if you're not a clean toss and you're not working, then maybe you pray.

I want to suggest to you that is so far from the teaching of scripture. Prayer is not something that we do when we can't do anything else in mission.

I want to suggest to you that praying is part of the mission, that praying is just as important as going. Here's something else controversial, that when you're praying your 30 days of challenge, that you are engaging in something that is just as important as what the Clint Hosses are doing in Peter Merisberg.

Every Christian is engaged in this global mission. Mission isn't just for the professional missionary. Going out to Mount Druid or reaching out to the homeless people in Chesswood isn't just for someone who's gone to Bible college.

Global mission is for all of us. And you, it doesn't matter what stage in life, what capacity, what resources, you can get involved in it. And the most important thing that you can do is to pray.

[24 : 39] Move by God's compassion, move to prayer. Well, what do we pray for, verse 38 again? Jesus says, pray for the Lord of the harvest to send out workers.

I have to say that this is actually quite hard to comprehend in many respects. It's kind of like an odd thing to pray for. You know, you would have expected Jesus to say, no, pray that the harvest is plentiful, pray that the harvest will be harvested.

You know, there's a world of needy people out there, pray that God will meet the needs of people. I mean, he can do that, can't he? He's our almighty God, created everything.

This is why this prayer is so odd, that of all the things that we are to pray for, that his disciples are to pray for, that we are to pray that God will send out workers.

Yes, our God can meet human needs directly, he can rain down manna from heaven to feed the hungry, he can rain down fire to devour the wicked.

[25 : 53] But here, Jesus commands his disciples to pray, not just to save people, but that God will send out workers into the harvest field.

The harvest is plentiful, but more workers is needed. just to skip forward in chapter 10, you see that Jesus then immediately sent out the disciples into the world.

The followers, in fact, became the answer to their own prayers. It is true that God could fix the world with a snap of finger.

That might be our wisdom and how we might see things, but God in his wisdom and in his might has chosen to save this world to meet the needs of people through other people.

Proclaiming, bringing the kingdom of his kingdom. For global mission is just not a task to be done, not just a project to undertake, but relationships to be formed.

[27 : 12] When we pray, when we engage in mission, we're forming a fellowship. We're being involved in the lives of people far, far away.

There's relationship. It is not just superstition. Somehow, if we raise X dollars, then things will happen. global mission involves faith.

It's not just a forming of relationship with other people, it is a forming of relationship with God. Fundamentally, at a theological level, we see here that global mission, the underlying theology, that God uses people, that almighty God who can use anything that he wants, use you and me, to save people.

That is why Jesus commands his followers to pray for God to set out workers. The context of the passage is different to ours in terms of its salvation historical context, but the plan continues.

There are still things relevant for us today, and I want to draw four conclusions from this passage. The first thing is, God's kingdom is still coming.

[28 : 37] As Jesus went around the towns and the villages proclaiming the kingdom of God, saying, you're on a collision course, so repent and believe in the good news, that is still true.

The kingdom of God is still coming. The judgment of God on this world is still coming. This is still the time to repent and believe the good news.

If you haven't done that, let me invite you to take the opportunity, for the window of opportunity is getting smaller. That is still true. The kingdom of God is still coming, the opportunity, to escape the judgment of God is still there.

Secondly, what is still true is the compassion of Jesus. Don't prove this Berkeley study to be true. As a religious person, don't be motivated by simply your doctrine.

Let your doctrine move your heart. Don't do things because you have to, or because everybody else is doing it. lift your eyes.

[29 : 50] See the needs. As you experience and see sin in this world, let that break your heart. Don't be unmoved.

Do something. Well, what to do? Pray. Pray. Pray. Take that challenge. Take the 30-day challenge.

Every day, not asking you to wake up at 4 in the morning, not asking you to spend 6 hours praying, although if you want to do that, go for it. How hard is it, do you think, to pray for the Goskins?

How long do you think they will take you? I don't know, 10 seconds? 30 seconds? It might take you a little while longer to find out where they are and what they're doing, but that wouldn't take more than two minutes or five minutes.

Spend five minutes every day just praying for the work of God in this world. Think about all the lost tribes, even in Chastwood.

[30 : 58] Do you know there are Napoles in Chastwood? I met a few. I didn't know that. Is there a Napoles church in Chastwood? I don't think so.

Pray for them. Where are the lost tribes? Where are the cultural barriers that we refuse to cross? Who are the lost people in our midst?

Is it a certain age group of people? Certain lifestyle of people? Certain professions? I mean, how many people working in restaurants could go to church on a Sunday?

Who reach out to them? Pray for them. Lastly, so God's kingdom is coming. Be filled with God's compassion.

Pray. And lastly, pray that the Lord of the harvest will send out workers. workers. Okay? This is not an imprimatur to think of the person you dislike the most and say, God sent him out to Afghanistan.

[32 : 07] Okay? It's not, you know, pray that God will send out workers. I mean, God has already sent out workers. Look at all these columns. God has sent out people.

Pray for them. Not just pray for them. It's a whole world that still does not know Jesus. Pray that God will send out workers, not just from out there somewhere.

Pray that he might send out workers from in here. But it could be you. How about that?

So when you pray and God answers your prayer, be prepared to go as well too. We'll come to that. in a few weeks' time. But for the moment, God's kingdom is coming.

Be filled with God's compassion. Pray. And finally, pray that God will send. Shall we pray? Gracious God and Father, we thank you that as you see our needs, as you saw our needs, you did not remain unmoved, but you sent your Son, our Lord Jesus Christ, to come into the world to deal with our sin and suffering.

[33 : 18] Thank you that you have promised that you bring an end to evil and death and sickness in the world. And we pray, Father, that Lord Jesus will come soon.

And we pray in the meantime that you will, in your great mercy, continue to send people out into Chesford, into Sydney, into Australia, into the world.

It is a world that is desperately lost without you. Break our heart, we pray, Father God. Help us to see those needs as you do. Help us to react emotionally the way that you do.

We pray not only that you will send people out, that you will send us out, that we will meet those needs, that we will proclaim the kingdom. And we pray, Father, that through this, that you might save many.

And we pray this in Jesus' name. Amen.