

Jesus, the first missionary

Disclaimer: this is an automatically generated machine transcription - there may be small errors or mistranscriptions. Please refer to the original audio if you are in any doubt.

Date: 13 December 2015

Preacher: Daniel Ralph

[0 : 00] Now hear God's word. The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, follow me.

Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip found Nathanael and said to him, we have found him whom Moses and the law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.

Nathanael said to him, can anything good come out of Nazareth? Philip said to him, come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him and said of him, behold, an Israelite indeed in whom there is no deceit.

Nathanael said to him, how do you know me? And Jesus answered him, before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you. Nathanael answered him, Rabbi, you are the son of God.

You are the king of Israel. Jesus answered him, because I said to you, I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.

[1 : 14] And he said to him, truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the son of man.

Amen. Amen. Well, I'd like to focus on this morning, seeing that we have two missionaries with us, on the fact that Jesus Christ was the first missionary.

I'm fond of pointing out when I teach at the Bible College, especially on the church, that where does missions begin? Almost everybody says it begins with the church, but the church didn't start missions.

God started a mission. God's mission produces a church. God's mission was sending Jesus, and Jesus produced us.

So if you want to ever know where the heart of missions is, it is actually in the nativity. It is actually in the first advent of Christ. It is in the fact that God sent his son into the world to seek and to save the lost.

[2 : 30] So church, the church, never came up with missions. God came up with missions. God, in fact, effectively is the missionary that we all follow.

And so when Jesus turns up, John doesn't start with the birth of Jesus. He doesn't start with the incarnation. But he does start at the place where Jesus comes as the son of God, and where we are to recognize that this missionary, Jesus, calls us to follow him.

Hence why the church today has missionaries. They're simply doing nothing other than doing what Jesus did. Now, it's worth pointing out Nathaniel's question, because it is the question that shows that most people have a bias to almost in every country that you live in.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Well, believe it or not, can anything good come out of Westerhales? Right?

Now, there are many people who ask that question in the same way Nathaniel asked that question. They've already made up their mind that nothing can good come out of Nazareth.

[3 : 40] Okay, the mind's already made up. Can anything good come out of Nazareth? So I want to point out to you something so obvious that you've missed it. And it's this, that God has created more homeland missionaries than he has overseas missionaries.

It's just that in the homeland, we call them evangelists. But they ought really to be called just Christians. Okay? Think about it for a moment.

That God has created more homeland missionaries than he has overseas missionaries. And so when we look out into the church today, we have two overseas missionaries with us, but we have a church full of homeland missionaries.

But we tend to forget this. And what happens when we tend to forget this? Well, it means that we forget a whole load of other things. Number one, that when we send missionaries abroad, and it's in the same way that Jesus is sent from heaven to earth.

I mean, talk about a trip. You know, missionaries we just send in the world, but Jesus came from heaven to this world, in a place that was absolutely perfect, into a place that is fallen.

[4 : 49] And we get used to this world in such a way, and so we send our missionaries abroad in order to make sure that those who don't have the gospel get to hear the gospel, exactly what we saw on the video.

There is nothing more important than making sure men and women, boys and girls, hear the gospel. And that's primarily why missionaries are sent abroad.

They're sent into areas that haven't heard the gospel and need to hear the gospel. Now, you may not think that because God has created a bunch of homeland missionaries, i.e. you, that the United Kingdom is a place that is unreached.

And you'd be absolutely right to think that the United Kingdom is not unreached, but I can tell you over the last 20 years or 30 years, it has become a place where it is un-evangelized. In other words, there are generations growing up now that have never heard the gospel, and they are as isolated from the gospel as somebody in the middle of a rainforest somewhere.

Okay, but we tend to lose the fact because someone once said once upon a time that we just so happen to live in a Christian country. Well, that afterglow of Christianity went out a long time ago.

[6 : 00] Okay, a long time ago. It just doesn't exist anymore. Hence why, as of last year, there are over 15,000 overseas missionaries in this country.

Now, why would anybody send a missionary to the United Kingdom that has ample of churches? Well, it's because it's not a reflection on the United Kingdom.

It's more of a reflection on the church. The reason why missionaries are being sent to the United Kingdom is not because, wow, look at the state of the United Kingdom. Rather, it's, wow, look at the state of the church.

Nobody's talking about Jesus. It seems that we have forgotten that this country, like all other countries, need to be evangelized with the gospel.

How do you feel when you hear that your country has overseas missionaries in it, only 15,000 of them sent from countries that are much poorer than this one and that may not be able to even muster a piece of bread for Christmas, let alone half a dozen presents.

[7 : 14] In other words, we live in a world that is shaped entirely differently than the way we perceive it from our angle. And the moment we begin to see it from somebody else's point of view, we begin to realize that, boy, do we need those missionaries and another 15,000 on top.

It seems like we, the church, have forgotten to follow Jesus because following Jesus means that we hear one word and one word more than any other, and it's go.

Well, I'm following you, yeah? Go. Go and make disciples and start with the people that live in the land that you live in. Now, the trouble with this is, is can anything good come out of the land that we live in?

Okay? Are we a Nathaniel? Do we not do it because we've already judged the area that we're in? Can anything good come out of Westerhales?

Now, we live in a world where it's easier to be invited than it is to be uninvited. I don't know if you've ever turned up somewhere where you've not been invited. I've done it on several occasions, not on purpose, but just mistake and been told quite politely, you know, you're not allowed in here.

[8 : 26] Well, thank you very much. I'll move on. But Jesus is telling you to go into a world where you're not going to be invited. But Jesus is telling you to go into his world. It belongs to him.

All authority has been given to him. And so go into my world and do what I say. And the invitation for you to go and tell the gospel to somebody else isn't going to come.

And so while it is easier to live in a world in which we are, where to be invited is easier to live than to be uninvited, you are uninvited guests in a sinful world. And you are told to go and tell the gospel to those who don't know it.

Jesus was sent from the Father, and Jesus tells his disciples here that they are to follow Jesus in a world which they will face opposition.

They are uninvited guests. Jesus is the uninvited guest. You only have to look at the Nativity and the First Advent to see the opposition that Jesus faced as the first missionary on earth sent from

heaven above to see that he is faced with opposition that nobody else could come up against in the same way.

[9 : 47] And the first opposition comes from somebody who's about to call to follow him. And the question is, well, can anything good come out of Nazareth? And the answer is, only the salvation of the world. Can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Yeah, only the salvation of the world. So be careful with your judgments. Be careful how you view things. God knows what he is doing.

But I want us to stop, and I want us to notice just a couple of things. The first is something that we've already mentioned, but I want to re-emphasize it, and that God's mission creates a church. God's church doesn't create missions. God's mission creates a church. And you've got to understand it that way around. Because if you don't understand it that way around, you'll see missions as something secondary to God.

That missions is something that some people in the church come up with, but not all of us. But when you understand that the mission, that the church is the product of God's mission, that the church is the result of God's mission, then you're going to have a totally different view on missions.

[10 : 59] And the view that you're going to have, especially as a homeland missionary, in other words, you're not going overseas, and thank God. See, God knows what he's doing there. He's given you the same language that everybody else speaks, and you live in the same type of culture that everybody else lives in.

You're the perfect person to witness to others. And so when you begin to see that God's mission created you, a missionary, you then begin to see that the lifeblood of all missions comes out of this place called Nazareth, the first missionary.

God's mission produces a people who go on mission because they simply follow Jesus. The second thing to notice is the question, can anything good come out of Nazareth?

Am I a person that already has my mind made up about Westerhales? Are you a person that already has your mind made up about Westerhales or about somewhere else?

Can anything good come out of it? Well, only the salvation of souls. The apostle Paul in the book of Acts was convicted by the Lord.

[12 : 15] People were telling him, look, you've got to move on. You know, nothing's happening here. Just move on. And the Lord had to speak to him quite clearly, and the words that the Lord said to him was that I have many people in this city who are mine.

Okay? They've just not come through yet. So can anything good come out of the place where you're in? Yeah, only the salvation of men and women, boys and girls. That's the goodness that can come out of it.

The trouble is, however, that when a particular town has a particular type of reputation, that are the type of questions that we ask. But they're not questions because we're looking for the answer. They're questions because we're already stating the answer. See, we want to serve people who are like us. The trouble is, is that when we pretend to serve people who are like us, we don't end up serving them because we want to keep them to like us.

So we think we're serving them with the gospel, when in fact, in order for us to keep it that way, we must not upset the apple cart. In other words, we've been invited into their house, but the last thing we want to do is to lose that right by saying that we agree with Jesus.

[13 : 30] Okay? The last thing we want to do, that is by saying that we agree with Jesus. Several years ago, there was a minister down in the south, as in the other south, that is London side, not the proper south west.

Yes. Yes. Did you not? In fact, I only saw this the other day that it struck me as something quite funny, but that I've always said that, you know, people find it quite hard to believe that Cornwall is actually a country, not a county.

And somebody showed me a clip of The Simpsons. Now, I never watched The Simpsons, but even on The Simpsons, you've got one of the little girls, Bart's sister, saying, free Cornwall now.

Did you have that for Scotland? So the proper self, but this minister down in the other south, talked about second person separation.

Nobody understood what he meant. But what he basically meant was that you can agree to follow someone and follow someone without actually saying anything that they say.

[14:42] And this is something that we tend to forget with Jesus. That Jesus did say something quite striking to us, but it's something that we ought not to forget.

That when Jesus tells us to go in the same way that he tells us to follow him, we're being called to no longer serve a certain type of people.

See, I've had to say this to plenty of ministry trainees, that one of the dangers that you're going to run into is the danger of choosing who you're going to serve.

Right? And they visualize what they're going to do for the Lord in the future, and the first thing that they visualize is people just like them. And I said, you're going to have to shatter that dream immediately because the way God gets people to serve people who are not like them is by putting them in places that they wouldn't necessarily choose to be in.

Now, we understand this entirely when it comes to overseas missions. We understand that overseas missionaries are serving people who are not like them. We understand that that is the purpose of mission, but we tend to forget it completely at home to serve people who are not like us.

[16:07] And we tend to stick to the people who are like us. And the trouble is, is that we become more like them than they do like us.

And so when you follow Jesus and when you follow, when you're told to go by Jesus, you are losing the right whom you're going to serve. When God sent his son into the world, it was to serve the people in the world.

And because we have been served by God in that way, we have lost the right who we choose to serve in this world. We've lost all rights as to who we choose to serve as the type of person.

Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Westerhales? So without putting the pressure on too much, but I do want to quote Jesus. Remember what Jesus said, that he said, or rather he did not just say, whoever is ashamed of me in this generation, I will be ashamed of him in glory.

Jesus didn't just say that. He said something else that I tend to think that we forget. What Jesus actually said was, whoever is ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of that person.

[17:31] Whoever is ashamed of me and my words, I will be ashamed of that person. The point here is that Jesus knows the difference between people who are not ashamed of him, but of people who will never say to others what Jesus thinks.

There are plenty of people who follow Jesus, but never mention to anybody else the views of Jesus. But Jesus clearly states that whoever is ashamed of him and his words, then he will be ashamed of them in the coming glory.

You see, Jesus is able to tell the difference. We think we can follow Jesus without saying to others what Jesus has said. And Jesus points it out quite clearly that that can happen.

Okay? If you're following Jesus, I'm not talking about Christianity, which can mean almost anything. And I'm not talking about being a believer, which can mean almost anything. I'm talking about what Jesus called us to do, to follow him, which cannot mean almost anything.

It means follow him. It means do what he did in the way that he did it and say the things that he did. And that's why Jesus adds to all this following him, whoever is ashamed of me and my words in this generation, I will be ashamed of him in the coming glory.

[18:50] So don't think that you're following Jesus if you're not listening and saying what Jesus says. Jesus makes it fairly clear that we cannot be ashamed of him without being ashamed of his words or vice versa.

Jesus has called us to walk a walk. And one of the Bible's favorite image for life with Christ is walking. I don't know if you've ever noticed that, that the favorite image of following Christ is this image of walking.

And that's because walking is not just a type of life. It's not just a style of life. It leads somewhere. Walking leads somewhere. Following Christ leads somewhere.

And this is something that we tend to forget when we choose not to follow Jesus in his ways. We tend to, we have separated walking and following from the fact that it actually leads somewhere. So when we don't follow Jesus in his ways, we still seem to think that we're going to end up in the same place. But if walking leads somewhere and if following someone leads somewhere, then why on earth would we think that if we stop following that we're going to end up in the same place as the person that we ought to be following?

[20 : 07] And Jesus calls these men here to follow him. Hence why Jesus speaks so clearly about the broad and the narrow way.

Everybody can walk. In conclusion then, notice what Jesus is saying. That Jesus wants us to know that he is the one sent from God.

In other words, that he is the original missionary who calls other people to follow him. God creates missionaries then because he sent Jesus. And I think the one thing that we need to settle with in our own heart and mind this morning is have I forgotten the very simplest thing that Jesus has actually asked me to do?

Out of everything else that I've done in my Christian life, out of everything else we have done in this church, out of everything else that we have done in terms of the vision project, have we forgotten the most simplest thing of all?

And that is following and speaking the words of Jesus to people who don't follow or have heard the words of Jesus. Perhaps our vision next year is really very simple.

[21 : 19] To do the one, the only vision that Jesus actually gave his church. It's quite incredible really, isn't it? That out of everything Jesus has given us to do, he has only given the church one thing to do.

One thing. It's a bit like Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden, isn't it? You've got all of these yeses and one no. There's only one tree that had no on it.

Everything else in the garden was yes. Everything else in the garden was yes. And when we get to evangelism, Jesus has given us one thing to do and we seem to be brilliant at doing everything else apart from the one thing.

Perhaps, I've certainly felt the pressure over the last couple of weeks at least to think that everything needs a reshuffle from serving ourselves to serving those who do not know the gospel. It's not that we're not doing it. We are doing it. The question here is whether or not we're doing it enough. And that's the challenge that faces us all this morning.

[22 : 28] Can anything good come out of Nazareth? Can anything good come out of Westerhales? I'll leave you to answer the question. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Thank you. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Thank you.

Thank you.

[24 : 05] Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.

Thank you.