

GM ... new // listening online ...

At the end of our Values series. [Go check out last 3 weeks]

Good for those who follow Jesus to be reminded what is important.

Helpful if you aren't a Christian and seeking. Clarify what it means to follow Jesus.

Today we are looking at our value of Partnering Together on Mission.

Mission is fulfilling Jesus' command to go everywhere making new disciples.

But a lot of church activities that we consider mission is actually trying to keep the saved entertained and coming back to church.

The danger is that we get fixated on what happens in the church.

We start caring about the wrong things.

Argue and quarrel over the color of carpets, walls, music styles, etc.

Thankfully, OHC isn't there. Hopefully, we never get there.

But I would draw our attention to one danger that could sidetrack us from mission.

It's something that I'm thankful for.

New people will often comment about real God's presence is in our services.

I never want that to change.

But that can't be what we reduce our Christianity too.

It's Tempting To Retreat Into Holy Huddles and Chasing God-Encounters

Matthew 17:1-3

And after six days Jesus took with him Peter and James, and John his brother, and led them up a high mountain

by themselves. 2 And he was transfigured before them, and his face shone like the sun, and his clothes became white as light. 3 And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah, talking with him.

This is an amazing moment.

I bet Peter, James, and John were all thinking how jealous the other disciples would be.

For many Christians these are the moments we hope for.

These are the moments frankly we need.

And for good reason. When we experience/encounter Jesus it is amazing ... it is a game changer!

We experience something transcendent and sensational.

It grows our faith.

Seeing Jesus is something we should pursue and desire.

But it is easy to turn a good thing into the only thing.

Matthew 17:4

4 And Peter said to Jesus, “Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah.”

Peter ... “such a good heart.” Just wants to stay in that place.

Kind of like when we go to Christian conferences or Worship concerts.

We can't imagine it getting any better than this. Let's make this last as long as possible.

If the Jews had an all-time fantasy league, Jesus / Moses / Elijah would be the superstars everyone would be after.

They have all three right there!!!

So Peter tells Jesus ... let's keep this conference going. I'll even build each of you a house so you don't have to “share a room”.

I'm guessing he was about to offer free room service, except God interrupted him.

If I didn't know the rest of the story my best guess would be that God was going to tell Peter "great response".

But he doesn't do that.

He also doesn't rebuke Peter.

He redirects him.

Matthew 17:5-8

5 He was still speaking when, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them, and a voice from the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased; listen to him." 6 When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. 7 But Jesus came and touched them, saying, "Rise, and have no fear." 8 And when they lifted up their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only.

How does this mountain-top experience end?

By God redirecting their hearts.

It's important to see Jesus.

But God wants more than that from us.

God says listen to and obey him.

So many of the stories that have come out of recent revivals is all about seeing Jesus, but not listening to him and obeying him.

Its this approach to Christianity that it's all about me.

God give me an experience to fix my problem.

But following Jesus is MORE THAN powerful God-encounters.

Following Jesus means **following Jesus**. [long obedience]

Where does Jesus take them?

Right back down the mountain.

Matthew 17:9-13

9 And as they were **coming down the mountain**, Jesus commanded them, “Tell no one the vision, until the Son of Man is raised from the dead.” **10** And the disciples asked him, “Then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come?” **11** He answered, “Elijah does come, and he will restore all things. **12** But I tell you that Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, **but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.**” **13** Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist.

Following Jesus can't look like a holy huddle.

We can't build a Christian bubble around our lives where we only interact with each other and chase Christian superstars around.

Jesus is telling his disciples that a long obedience involves suffering.

Suffering doesn't happen on the mountain-top.

And being a Christian superstar like Elijah and Moses and Jesus doesn't keep you from suffering either.

All of these dudes lives were marked with a long obedience to God and they suffered greatly.

This is because they didn't run away from people and live in isolation.

They walked with people who suffered.

Mission Means Moving With Jesus Toward Hurting People

Matthew 17:14-15

14 And when they came to the crowd, a man came up to him and, kneeling before him, 15 said, "Lord, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and he suffers terribly. For often he falls into the fire, and often into the water.

Jesus couldn't stay up the mountain. And he couldn't allow his disciples to stay up the mountain.

There were people down the mountain that needed Him.

There were people suffering that could only be helped by Jesus.

They didn't see the crowd and duck behind a rock.

They came right to the crowd.

Why? That is where God does his work.

He is in the business of saving and healing hurting people.

[the sick need a physician]

Jesus' disciples aren't meant to keep Jesus all to themselves.

We want others to see Jesus too!

We move toward people knowing Jesus is with us.

He is with us b/c he promised the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Luke 24:49

49 And behold, I am sending the promise of my Father upon you. But stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

Jesus commands his disciples ... Couldn't start mission until clothed with power. (Holy Spirit / very presence of Almighty God!)

Important for us to realize ... B/C ONLY God has the power to save and make hurting people whole.

Which means we don't try and do this in our own strength.

Mission Requires Jesus' Authority and Power.

Matthew 17:16

16 And I brought him to your disciples, and they could not heal him.”

Boy, If I had a nickel for everytime that was true of my pastoring.

Someone struggling with addiction
(porn/co-dependency/substances) came to me and I
couldn't heal them.

A couple with a broken marriage comes to me for help and I
can't fix it.

People go to counseling b/c they want the pro to fix their
problems.

W/O Holy Spirit's power the best we can do is teach how to
cope with them.

But real change / real healing / only God can do that.

So we need to bring people to Jesus. [need HS/power]

Matthew 17:17-18

17 And Jesus answered, "O faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him here to me." 18 And Jesus rebuked the demon, and it came out of him, and the boy was healed instantly.

Sometimes the healing is instant. (like in this case)

I wish I could pray for people once and BOOM! all fixed.

That can happen.

But most often it takes some fighting and longer obedience.

And that doesn't sound fun ... that sounds tiring.

So we look for the shortcut.

Let's look for some way that it worked before ... let's repeat that (lighting / phrase / hand motion / program).

But that isn't how mission works.

Like I said, Mission is accomplished in Jesus' authority and power ... AND

We Need To Listen and Follow Jesus' Wisdom For The Mission.

Matthew 17:19-20a

19 Then the disciples came to Jesus privately and said, “Why could we not cast it out?” 20 He said to them, “Because of your little faith. [MK cf. fasting&praying].

Jesus isn't saying have BIG faith and you'll walking around zapping demons and snapping your fingers and everything will tidy up like Mary Poppins.

The smallness of their faith kept them from being tenacious.

They had a small view of what faith does.

Sometimes faith means God's power intervenes immediately.

Sometimes faith helps us to push longer and harder to intercede (like in this case). [only prayer&fasting].

This whole episode happened after the time Jesus sent all his disciples out two-by-two. He gave the authority to cast out demons and heal the sick and they were successful.

Suddenly, what worked before didn't work this time.

The disciples were bewildered, and rightfully so.

“We got the right formula!” Rinse and repeat baby!

Western Church we do mission with faith in the Father, Son, and Holy System.

We go around looking for the latest successful program to implement.

Kind of like the field of dreams approach to mission.

“If we build it they will come.”

What we need to get back to is faith in the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

I'm not against systems.

HOWEVER, if you look at the early church; any systems came in response to growth // never caused growth.

There is a proven approach to mission that is tried and true throughout church history.

- Commitment / long obedience to proclaiming and demonstrating the Gospel
- AND, commitment / long obedience to prayer [and fasting].

*Little faith gives up when God
doesn't respond quickly enough.*

Students of revivals throughout church history note a common rhythm.

Major God movements are commonly preceded by prayer movements.

Prayer ... “God adoring ... Jesus exalting ... Kingdom desiring” prayer.

You might say, “The church prays. I pray.”

But often what we mean is that we pray to God for what we need.

One pastor puts it this way...

“We often pray to God for what is in his hands and miss his face. But when you pray to God to see his face he loves to open his hands.”

Prayer isn't about moving God to our hearts. It moves us to God's heart.

Prayer isn't getting God behind our plans. Prayer is the plan.
[& catching God's plan]

We catch the wisdom of God for His mission in prayer.

Instead of always adopting man's wisdom for how to accomplish the mission ... we should adopt the habit of going directly to the source in prayer.

Prayer is a labor of love that builds faith.

Prayer and fasting is a tenacious, sacrificial pursuing of God's power and purpose.

Simultaneously it is an admission of our weakness and dependency on God.

How often do I pray for someone once and never again?
“Too often.”

I like the idea of one and done. [Convenient!]

But for the sake of the mission // for the sake of seeing God's power and authority work through us we must be committed to persevere in these things.

If we don't we are going to end up putting our hope in systems and programs instead of being led by the Holy Spirit's wisdom, authority, and power.

Let's be led by the Holy Spirit.

God doesn't promise us if we get it right that it is going to make mission easy work.

Mission Will Be Hard; But All Things Are Possible With God

Matthew 17:20b

“...For truly, I say to you, if you have faith like a grain of mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from

here to there,' and it will move, and nothing will be impossible for you."

When we are on mission we will run into mountains.

Sometimes we will see God move those mountains
[immediately / slowly] ...
sometimes we won't.

But the point is that we always go with faith, knowing that
God can overcome the impossible.

We face a mountain called addiction.

We've seen God's power at work already. But it is going to
take big steady faith in God's power and authority to see
that mountain move.

What keeps us from giving up?

Looking to the cross and the resurrection.

Jesus did the impossible.

Was it hard? ... dying on the cross was crazy hard.
Hardest thing ever done.

But through it he defeated the impossible mountains of sin
and death.

RESPONSE

Maybe you are here facing the hopelessness of your sin.

The mountain you can't move or climb.

Good news ... Jesus did it for you ... faith in his death and
resurrection.

Maybe you are experiencing mission fatigue or apathy.

Remember Jesus didn't call his disciples into a holy huddle
on a mountain.

We follow him, guided by the Holy Spirit, into the lives of
hurting people.

We go with the same power that raised Jesus from the
dead.

All things are possible with God!

March 6th this church is going to fast and pray. Pray for the mountains in our city. Pray for the mountains in our lives. Pray for the people we know who are hurting and need Jesus.

Put it on your calendar, March 6, here at the church at 6pm.

COMMUNION

If you believe in Jesus as Lord and Savior we are going to take communion.

Jesus' body broken to heal our brokenness.

Jesus' blood shed to forgive our sins.

It is a moment to give thanks.

It is a moment to nourish our faith by faith in our God who moved the impossible mountain for us and continues to do so.