Look Around: Seeing Your Everyday Life as a Mission Field

There are good things, and there are better things.

That distinction sounds simple, but it carries the weight of a profound spiritual challenge. A husband who cleans the entire kitchen -- wiping cabinets, mopping floors, organizing the pantry -- has done something good. But if he forgot to pick up his daughter in the process, he missed the better thing. Good and better are not the same, and sometimes the difference between them is simply a matter of where we have fixed our eyes.

This is exactly the challenge facing followers of Jesus today. We can fill our lives with good things -- good causes, good conversations, good community -- and still miss the better thing that is standing right in front of us. The better thing is this: opening our eyes to see the people around us as a mission field, and being willing to talk with them about Jesus.

You Are Where You Are on Purpose

One of the most grounding truths in all of Scripture is found in Acts 17:26, where the apostle Paul declares that God has determined our appointed times and the boundaries of where we live. Read that slowly. The neighborhood you live in, the workplace you clock into every morning, the school hallways you walk through, the sports teams you are part of, the restaurants you frequent -- none of that is accidental. God has placed you there, at this time, for a reason.

The mission field is not always somewhere extra that we have to travel to reach. More often than not, it is right in front of us. We just have not trained our eyes to see it.

What Jesus Actually Said

In Acts 1:8, Jesus gives his followers a commission that is at once simple and staggering. He tells them they will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon them, and that they will be his witnesses -- in Jerusalem, throughout Judea, in Samaria, and to the ends of the earth. Notice the word "will." Not "might." Not "when you feel ready." You will be my witnesses. It is not an invitation to consider. It is a declaration of identity and purpose.

The Greek word translated "witnesses" is the word martus, from which we get the word martyr. A witness, in the deepest sense of that word, is someone willing to go on record about Jesus no matter the cost. Throughout history, millions of believers have paid for that witness with their lives. You may not be called to that, but you are called to something: a willingness to say, in whatever field your life finds you, I will do what I can to make Jesus known here.

Four Fields, Four Challenges

The geographic progression Jesus lays out -- Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, the ends of the earth -- is more than a travel itinerary. Each location represents a distinct field of witness, and each comes with its own particular challenge.

Jerusalem was the immediate. It was the city where those first disciples lived and moved. For us, Jerusalem is the closest circle -- family, friends, neighbors, coworkers. These are the people we know best, which makes them the most natural candidates for a gospel conversation. But it also makes rejection feel most personal. When a conversation about Jesus goes sideways with a family member, you still have to sit across from them at Thanksgiving. When a friend pulls away because of what you shared, the silence is loud. Jerusalem asks us to accept the risk of rejection in the places where we are most known.

Judea was the countryside surrounding Jerusalem -- full of people with shared values, shared traditions, and a shared cultural backdrop. The temptation in Judea is assumption. We look at the people around us who seem familiar, who grew up in the same kind of community we did, and we think, surely they already know. But familiarity does not equal faith. Proximity to religious culture is not the same as a personal relationship with Jesus. The field of Judea calls us not to assume, but to ask.

Samaria is where it gets uncomfortable. Jews and Samaritans had deep-rooted animosity between them. They shared some history, some religious roots, but the hostility and bias that separated them had calcified over generations. Jesus sent his disciples there anyway. He did not allow cultural tension to define the boundaries of the mission. The field of Samaria challenges us to carry the gospel across the lines of difference and discomfort, to the people we might be most tempted to avoid or write off. Owning the Great Commission does not give us the right to decide who gets to hear it.

The ends of the earth once felt like a distant concept -- missionaries boarding planes for foreign lands. But the nations are no longer only far away. University cities, in particular, host students and faculty from dozens of countries in a single semester. The ends of the earth have moved into the apartment complex down the street. The question is whether we will notice.

The Answer to Someone's Prayer

Here is a thought worth sitting with: you may be the answer to someone's prayer. Someone prayed over your neighborhood that God would send a believing family to be a light there. Someone prayed over your workplace that a follower of Jesus would show up and carry hope into that space. Someone prayed over your school, your team, your community. And then you arrived.

God is not sending someone else into your field. He sent you.

The mission that began in the book of Acts is not finished. The proclamation of the salvation Jesus offers is still unfinished work, and it is work that belongs to every person who calls themselves a follower of Christ. The fields are not far away. They are ripe, and they are right in front of us.

Open your eyes. Look around. The mission field is closer than you think.

Here is a list of all scripture references mentioned or alluded to in the sermon:

- Acts 1:1-3

- Acts 1:8

- Acts 17:26

Alluded To or Referenced in Context

- Luke 1:3 (Luke's address to Theophilus in the Gospel of Luke)

- Acts 23:26 and Acts 24:3 (the designation "most excellent" applied to Felix and Festus)

- Philippians 4:22 (believers in Caesar's household)

- Mark 1:4-5 (the countryside of Judea going out to John the Baptist)

- Luke 10:30-37 (the parable of the Good Samaritan)

- Luke 9:54 (disciples asking to call down fire on Samaritans)

- John 4:35 (fields ripe for harvest)

- Matthew 9:38 (pray to the Lord of the harvest to send laborers)

Thematically Relevant Verses Not Explicitly Named

- Matthew 28:19-20 (the Great Commission)

- John 20:21 (as the Father sent me, so I send you)

- Romans 10:14 (how shall they hear without a preacher)

- Isaiah 6:8 (here am I, send me)