



LIFE AS MISSION
Priority of the Mission
Week 6

Opening prayer

Prayer for the persecuted church:

Prayer for a local church:

This morning we pray for our brother Erick Cobb and Covenant Grace Church.

Closing prayer

Introduction:

When you think of the ministry of Jesus when He walked this earth what comes to mind? Compassion? Healing? The Sermon on the

Mount? How about preaching? Do you know the first words Jesus said when He began His public ministry?

In the gospel of Matthew, the beginning of the public ministry of Jesus is described this way:

Matthew 4:17

¹⁷ From that time Jesus began to preach, saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

From that time, after He was tempted in the wilderness and spent a good deal of time, 40 days and 40 nights, fasting and praying, He began preaching the gospel. Jesus began His ministry by preaching the gospel. Before a miracle is mentioned in the gospel of Matthew, Jesus is preaching the gospel.

When you begin with something, it shows that it's a priority. That's what the Apostle Paul reminded the Corinthians of when he wrote:

1 Corinthians 15:3-4

³ For I delivered to you as of first importance what I also received: that Christ died for our sins in accordance with the Scriptures, ⁴ that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day in accordance with the Scriptures,

This is of first importance, meaning it's a priority. And the truth of the matter is this —
the gospel will only advance if it's our priority.

The first words of Jesus's public ministry are not, "Be healed," but, "Repent."

Matthew 4:18

¹⁸ While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon (who is called Peter) and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.

Walking by the Sea... Jesus gives us a great example here of finding opportunity for the

gospel in everyday life, which brings us to our first point today:

1. When the gospel is a priority, each day presents us with opportunities for the gospel.

The point is we only take advantage of the opportunities when the gospel is a priority. Because we're only looking for opportunities when the gospel is a priority.

Jesus sees two ordinary men with ordinary occupations going about their business. And you could classify these men as blue collar workers.

The World Atlas says this: “The commercial fishing industry is one of the largest, and oldest, market sectors in the world.” These men made their living in commercial fishing. Today, when we think of prestigious occupations, we think doctors and nurses and scientists, not fishermen. Jesus chose fishermen for a reason.

Matthew 4:19

¹⁹ And he said to them, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

Now, this might sound like an invitation. But any invitation from Jesus, being that He is Lord of all, can also be seen as a command. “Follow me” is in the imperative form here, meaning it is a command.

And He uses their means of livelihood as an analogy for what life will be like following Him.

“Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.”

What might Jesus say to other occupations today? To a cab driver, for instance? “Follow me, and you’ll get people where they really need to be.”

To a teacher? “Follow me, and you’ll give people true wisdom.”

To a doctor? “Follow me, and you’ll heal people of wounds they cannot see.”

This Scripture leads us to our next point:

2. Following Jesus makes the Great Commission our priority.

Following Jesus includes a call to make the gospel known. Now, the goal of this series is simply making that part of your mindset as a Christian. As we continue on with future series, we'll focus on the practical ways of engaging people with the gospel.

Matthew 4:20

²⁰ Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

They left their nets and followed him. The implication is that whatever business they had left to attend to that day, they left it and followed Jesus. In the middle of work, they left. This was not an impulsive decision on their part. Just because they were blue collar workers doesn't mean they weren't thinking deeply about the things of God. Maybe they'd

heard Jesus preach already, because Jesus had already been preaching the gospel at this point. They clearly thought highly of Him already, because you don't just throw down your nets and follow a complete stranger.

These were men who wanted to know the Living God. These were kingdom-minded men who had not yet heard Jesus say:

Matthew 6:33

33 But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you.

The point is this:

3. The Kingdom of God came first for them.

Where does the Kingdom of God fit into for your life? Where is the Kingdom of God in your daily thoughts? Do you think about God often? Do you think about what He wants for

people often? Do you think about what He wants from you?

Matthew 4:21-24

²¹ And going on from there he saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets, and he called them.

²² Immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him.

That's four fishermen He called. Do you think He might be saying something about what it means to follow Him?

²³ And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people.

He preached and then He healed. All His caring for the needs of the people was accompanied by preaching of the gospel. This

is why we can never separate the gospel from social justice, because Jesus didn't separate them. He never separated caring for people with preaching to people.

But this also shows us something I don't think we often consider. I don't think we often think of it this way — but in these verses we find that Jesus had an evangelistic strategy for reaching people. It was simply teaching and debating and healing in small, local synagogues. The synagogue was the focal point of Jewish life. It acted as the community

center during the week and the place of worship on the Sabbath. The custom of the church gathering comes directly from the synagogue. The point is this, having an evangelistic strategy is wise and biblical. The elders and I are meeting with two gentlemen at our next meeting to discuss an evangelistic strategy for our church to engage in.

And let's be clear about this — what's the purpose of an evangelistic strategy? To spread the fame of Jesus Christ.

24 So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, those having seizures, and paralytics, and he healed them.

They brought people to Jesus. This is the “come and see” aspect of evangelism. It’s like saying to someone, “I know someone who can help with that.”

Now, some of you might be saying, “Yeah, but... I get that Jesus said some helpful things, yeah, but you want me to believe He literally healed people?”

When you look at how influential Jesus Christ continues to be in this world, limiting His popularity to a few good sayings doesn't really explain the passion people have for Him even today. I think a better explanation is that His fame spread so quickly because He healed people. I would even say that's one of the reasons for His continued popularity

today. The fact that we don't experience the ministry of Jesus here in the west like they're experiencing it right now in the global south should tell us that our experiences are limited. Our experiences are not the whole picture. So, maybe your view of Jesus right now is not the whole picture.

So, His disciples brought people to Him. The "come and see" form of evangelism. Back then they could physically bring people to see Jesus.

How do we bring people to Jesus today? Two simple and biblical ways. One, encourage people to read the Bible. Simply say, “I would encourage you to read the gospel of John. It’ll be in the table of contents for the New Testament.”

Two, bringing people to church to hear the gospel message is another simple biblical model of evangelism — the “come and see” model.

And here’s the thing:

4. People seek Jesus because He helps them.

It's the reason people sought Him then and it's the reason people seek Him today. It's the reason people might be interested in looking closer at some of the things Jesus said about Himself, because they know that Jesus helps people.

Why do they think that? Because people that Jesus has helped have told them. He still has

that reputation, because He's still doing it. Jesus still helps people. And as He helps them they experience Him. And as they experience Him they begin to believe Him.

- “God, if you can do something with my life, it's yours.”

Matthew 4:25

²⁵ And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

Jesus looked for people everywhere. He's still looking for people everywhere. He's just using us to accomplish that.

GOSPEL REMINDER: “While walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers...” Jesus actively sought you to make you His own.

GC ACTION STEP: Surprise employees of local businesses with a small gift such as a basket of candy or some gift cards or something along those lines. Bring in one package to be shared

by store employees and leave a card that reads something like, “We appreciate how you serve the community with your business, and we wanted to share God's love in a practical way.” (Be sure you give items only to employees, so they don't think you are "soliciting" their customers.)