



gracefellowship

Series: Our Global Mission
Date: January 8, 2023

Title: God's Redeeming Love
Passage: John 3:16

God is active all over the world. Sometimes we get so focused on our environment that we don't pay attention to the fact that the activity of God is still changing lives in every corner of our world. In fact, the greatest growth the church is experiencing and where we are seeing disciple makers and churches multiplying is happening outside the United States!

Probably the most famous verse in the Bible highlights God's redemptive plan for the world.

:: John 3:16-17

16 For God so loved the *world* that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.

17 For God did not send his Son into the *world* to condemn the *world*, but to save the *world* through him.

God is motivated by His love. His love isn't contained to one group of people or one nation or one location. God's love is global. And because God's love is global He desires to infuse us with that same love and passion to see redemption come to the nations!

This morning we are going to look back at God's plan for bringing the nations into relationship with Himself, but before we look back to see how God has established His plan and is carrying it out, let's look forward to see the fulfillment of God's work. It's nice to know how something is going to turn out, right? I mean, if you were going to start a project and someone could show you the finished product and it was an absolute train wreck, you wouldn't begin the project, would you? But if you were going to jump into a major undertaking- even if it scared you- and you knew for certainty that it would be a success, you would do it, even if it were hard.

God gives us a view of the future in Revelation 7 and shows us that the mission He has called us to- even though it is challenging- is worth the risk, pain, effort, and resources that we invest to be on mission with Him.

:: Revelation 7:9-10

9 After this I looked, and there before me was a great multitude that no one could count, from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and before the Lamb. They were wearing white robes and were holding palm branches in their hands.

10 And they cried out in a loud voice: "Salvation belongs to our God, who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."

All nations, languages, tribes and tongues will be represented in heaven. Why? Salvation *belongs* to our God! He is working through His own sovereign ways and through His own people to take the message of salvation to the entire world. Jesus invited- no commanded- us to be part of this work as we follow as His disciples.

:: Matthew 28:19-20

18 Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

19 Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."

Jesus left his disciples (us included) with marching orders when he left earth: go to the nations and make disciples! But Jesus' disciples did what we so often do- they got comfortable and said, "Let's stay home and make disciples!"

Why not? The church in Jerusalem was growing by the thousands! The earliest Christians had their hands full at home tending to their own church, why leave and go to the nations? Well, because Jesus said to! But we don't always do what Jesus says- especially when things are easy and we feel like there is no urgency. But that season of peace in the early church didn't last long.

In Acts 7 one of the first Deacons, Stephen, preached boldly about Jesus being the Messiah. It made the crowd and the religious leaders so mad they killed him. Then look what happens next in Acts 8:1-3.

:: Acts 8:1-4

1 And Saul approved of their killing him. On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria.

2 Godly men buried Stephen and mourned deeply for him.

3 But Saul began to destroy the church. Going from house to house, he dragged off both men and women and put them in prison.

4 Those who had been scattered preached the word wherever they went.

Last week we talked about the things that happen everywhere in the world as the

church is established and we see it play out here:

1. The Church Multiplies

The church was growing and house churches were popping up everywhere. Relational discipleship was the driving force for the growth of the Church. But then they had a new problem- people's needs weren't being met.

2. Equip leaders

There were leaders for the house churches and Deacons were placed in positions to serve and meet needs for the growing church. But, preaching and teaching about Jesus being the Messiah and the Savior of the world brought powerful opposition.

3. The Church faces opposition and persecution.

Believers were forced out of their homes and out of Jerusalem as they went on the run from Saul and others like him who wanted to imprison or kill them and put a stop to this new movement of Jesus followers. But when the church faces persecution the final piece of the puzzle is put in place.

4. The gospel goes out to the unreached

When they were scattered they preached the word everywhere they went. Persecution wasn't a deterrent to the gospel, it was kindling!

I'm not saying we should pray for persecution, but God does use the tragic circumstances that come with persecution to advance His Kingdom. **We should be praying for God to shake us to our core and to make us uncomfortable until we are willing to get out of our comfort zones and take His gospel to the ends of the earth.**

This is what God did with Peter in Acts 10-11 by sending him to Gentiles with the gospel.

Recap Acts 10: Peter had a dream one afternoon where God showed him unclean animals according to Jewish Law; but Peter was commanded to kill an animal and eat it. He refused multiple times. God finally tells Peter don't call anything unclean that I have called clean. That same afternoon some Gentiles show up at the house where Peter is staying and tell him their master saw a vision where an angel instructed him to send for Peter so he could be told how to be saved. Guess what the Gentiles are to the Jews: unclean! You don't go into a Gentiles home or associate with a Gentile if you are Jewish. But Jesus' salvation message is for everyone- and Peter had just been told not to call things unclean that God calls clean- so Peter went with the men. When he shared the story of Jesus and told Cornelius and his family how to be saved, the Holy Spirit came upon them exactly the same way He had come on the disciples at Pentecost! God was doing the same work in a different location because the love of God isn't limited to a specific people or place.

So, with that in mind, I want us to look at why we stress the importance of world missions and why we talk about being on mission with God in our daily lives.

World missions are important because everyone matters to God and because Jesus has commanded His Church to go to the nations.

To carry out the work of redeeming the nations God is looking for partners. He brought Israel out of slavery and promised to bless the whole world through them. They would introduce the world to a God that was vastly different than the other gods. Israel would be a kingdom of priests who would show others how to be in relationship with the God who created them. And now in the New Testament era, God has invited us to be in partnership with Him. Disciples of Jesus are the called out ones who are meant to live in such a counter-cultural way that the rest of the world wants what we have. Unfortunately, rather than having a heart for the people of the world and desiring to show them the love of God, we have engaged in culture wars and isolated ourselves from the very people God has called us to go to and share His love and redemption with.

I recently heard it said that the hard part for God was not getting His people out of Egypt, but getting Egypt out of His people! Jesus has paid for our sins and redeemed us, but it is a lifelong process to die to sin and live for Jesus. But as we do live for Him, we are called to join Him in introducing others to His love and grace.

This was Jesus' intention for His disciples from the very beginning. As Jesus was getting ready to begin his ministry he chose 12 men to be his disciples. Here's how Mark describes Jesus' vision for the life he was calling them to...

:: Mark 3:13-15

13 Jesus went up on a mountainside and called to him those he wanted, and they came to him.

14 He appointed twelve that they might be with him and that he might send them out to preach

15 and to have authority to drive out demons.

The Call of Jesus to Disciple-making:

- a. Follow Me**
- b. Take the gospel out to the world**
- c. Go to the darkest, most broken places of the world and bring healing.**

Being on mission is not what we do when we fly to another country; being on mission is what we do when we worship and exalt God in our daily life. Our giving and our going on mission is born out of our worship and a heart that is growing in line with the heart of our King. Remember, this is about love. If I have found the greatest love the world has ever known and the love that can rescue people from their sins, but I don't tell others about it, I'm not acting in love toward them!

Penn Jillette, of the famous magician duo Penn and Teller, is an atheist and he was quoted as saying this:

“I’ve always said that I don’t respect people who don’t proselytize. I don’t respect that at all. If you believe that there’s a heaven and a hell, and people could be going to hell or not getting eternal life, and you think that it’s not really worth telling them this because it would make it socially awkward—and atheists who think people shouldn’t proselytize and who say just leave me alone and keep your religion to yourself—how much do you have to hate somebody to *not* proselytize? How much do you have to hate somebody to believe everlasting life is possible and not tell them that?”

“I mean, if I believed, beyond the shadow of a doubt, that a truck was coming at you, and you didn’t believe that truck was bearing down on you, there is a certain point where I tackle you. And this is *more* important than that.”

(<https://www.thegospelcoalition.org/blogs/justin-taylor/how-much-do-you-have-to-hate-somebody-to-not-proselytize/>)

If we love people who are far from God, we go to them in hopes of bringing them into relationship with God. The mission field begins right here in Kingsport, TN! But for those of us who can go to the world and we make excuses for why we don’t, I want us to grasp this morning the calling of Jesus on our lives and ask us to prayerfully seek God about what our role in going to the nations needs to be moving forward.

So, let’s end with some practical application:

What can I do?

- Make worship of Jesus a daily part of your life.
- Pray for the nations (Great resources in the back of the Devotional Guide)
- Give to missions (where your treasure is there your heart will be also)
- Go and get a passport. Put your “yes” on the table.
- Trust God. Remember, it’s not your responsibility to save people. It’s your responsibility to worship God and follow Him, trusting He will bring salvation to people you engage with.

AS we close this morning I want to introduce you to John Lufi. John and his wife, Bethany and their 3 sons attend GFC. John and Bethany has also served overseas as missionaries for a season. One of the goals for the Mission Team is to help people discover if God is calling them to world missions. This morning John will share about the call God put on his life and his wife to join as a partner in going to the nations with the gospel.