



gracefellowship

Series: Our Global Mission
Date: January 15, 2023

Title: Who Does God Use for His Global Mission?
Passage: Acts 1:3-8

Scripture Reading: Isaiah 6

Have you ever asked this question: When we receive Jesus as our Savior, why doesn't He just transport us to heaven? Why leave us here? If we are meant to join His Kingdom and be with Him forever, why not just teleport us to heaven when we accept Jesus as Savior?

The answer is really two fold:

1. The Kingdom of heaven isn't a future reality. We are part of God's Kingdom being introduced on earth little by little throughout history.
2. We are meant to join the mission of Jesus!

We participate in God's Kingdom here on earth as we join the mission of Jesus to expand His Kingdom. If you are ever sitting around thinking to yourself, "The Christian life is boring- there's nothing to do between worship services on Sunday!" You've got the wrong idea of Christianity and discipleship! Being a follower of Jesus means you are continually being changed by Jesus and being invited to be on mission with Jesus to change the world!

If you look in Acts 1 you see a conversation that takes place between Jesus and his disciples:

:: Acts 1:3-8

3 After his suffering, he presented himself to them and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the kingdom of God.

4 On one occasion, while he was eating with them, he gave them this command: "Do not leave Jerusalem, but wait for the gift my Father promised, which you have heard me speak about.

5 For John baptized with water, but in a few days you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit."

6 Then they gathered around him and asked him, "Lord, are you at this time going to restore the kingdom to Israel?"

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father

has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

For forty days Jesus spends time talking with His disciples about the Kingdom of heaven, but they still don't fully understand what that all means. They are still looking for Jesus to set up a throne and rule the people of Israel in Jerusalem.

Their primary concern: "...are you ...going to restore the kingdom to Israel?" (vs 6)

But Jesus' response sets a whole new path of thought for them:

7 He said to them: "It is not for you to know the times or dates the Father has set by his own authority.

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.”

Jesus basically says, "You're thinking about being rulers; I want you to be witnesses!"

"You're thinking about the nation of Israel; I want to send you to the whole earth!"

All this month we have been looking at the fact that God's heart beats for the nations of the earth and His desire is for all people everywhere to know Him and experience His love. Today we are going to see God's plan for seeing that reality come about.

God has zeal to see people all over the world join His Kingdom and join His mission. God's plan to reach the nations with the gospel is His Church.

The Church is you. And me. But mostly it's US! We are supposed to be about this mission together. This isn't an individual's responsibility. The mission to go make disciples of all nations is not for the super-christian (those don't exist, by the way). God uses our collective efforts to take the good news of salvation from sin through the death and resurrection of Jesus to the whole world!

God's plan to reach the nations with the gospel is for disciples of Jesus to receive the blessings of God- the power of the Holy Spirit- into our lives, and to be obedient by making disciples of all the earth.

That's plan A. And if that isn't working, then plan B is to go back and recommit to plan A!

Go back and look at verse 8:

8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the

earth.”

Jesus expects that His disciples will be working to fulfill His mission in the power of His Spirit.

All of us who follow Jesus have a role to play in reaching the world with the good news of salvation in Jesus and to fulfill our part of making disciples locally, nationally and internationally. There are three ways we can think about fulfilling our part of God’s plan.

:: Romans 10:12-15

12 For there is no difference between Jew and Gentile—the same Lord is Lord of all and richly blesses all who call on him,

13 for, “Everyone who calls on the name of the Lord will be saved.”

14 How, then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? And how can they hear without someone preaching to them?

15 And how can anyone preach unless they are sent? As it is written: “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring good news!”

1. Be someone who learns

Maybe you’re new to faith or the ideas of God’s global focus and your role in reaching the nations with the gospel. You need to be a learner right now, asking God to show you how to structure your budget to give and be a sender and how to prepare you to go in the future. Ask yourself this question: How will I think about global missions differently 1 year from now? 5 years from now? Be a learner; God has a role for you to play in His plan to take make disciples in the world. And the best place to start is by going on a local mission trip! Learn how to serve and go right here!

- Join our team going to KY this April.
- Be part of local outreach projects our church will do this year.
- FunFest will be a time we will mobilize people to spread God’s love.
- Investigate the resources in the back of the JTerm booklet
- Go to an interest meeting for El Salvador or Nicaragua- even if you don’t plan to go on the trip!

Find ways to learn about what God is doing in the world and where He may be calling you to join His mission.

2. Be someone who sends

Romans 10:15 says, “How can anyone preach unless they are sent?” Some of you right now can’t go on a mission trip, but you can support missions. You can be a sender through financial gifts and through prayer for people who God has opened the doors to be on the mission field in His Name. I typically go on short-term mission trips. God has given me a passion for the local church. So, our family tries to support those who are being sent. We are currently monthly

supporters of people on 3 different continents. We can't be in those places, but we can support someone who was willing to go. We also sponsor a child through Compassion International, an organization that helps people escape poverty.

Our church has adopted a policy shift in the years following COVID's initial outbreak. When Covid hit many American missionaries were pulled off the mission field and sent home. The same thing happens in places when war breaks out or there is civil or political unrest. So we decided about a year ago to begin sponsoring people who are nationals in the place our partnerships reach. When something happens that would cause most missionaries to have to pull out, they stay. They are part of the culture, part of the community and have life-long vested interest in the growth of the Church in their area. This also allows us to reach places we can't always send Americans. When it comes to closed countries to the gospel, we can still partner with people and organizations who live and are based in those places.

Being a sender allows you to play a role in taking the gospel to the nations and being a blessing to the one being sent.

3. Be someone who goes

How can people hear about the salvation from sin God offers to them if no one is going and preaching the truth of God's love? We need people who will commit to go to the nations- that may be short-term or long-term commitments. In fact, this morning at the end of the service I'm going to introduce you to someone who is leaving this week to go on a short term mission trip to Thailand!

Here's what I've learned in my life when God has given me chances to go out of my comfort zone: Going to the nations changes how I live on mission at home! I've had the opportunity to do mission trips in several countries and every time I came home more thankful and more focused on fulfilling the Great Commission in my own community. My first international mission trip came when I was a Senior in High School. Our Student Ministry went to Reynosa, Mexico. It was the first time in my life I was confronted with abject poverty and what appeared to me to be complete hopelessness. But do you know what I found in that setting? Joy that was not dependent on "stuff." I met some of the most joyful people I've ever been around as we played with kids who lived in homes made out of scraps from the nearby junkyard. I came home with a greater appreciation for the blessings of my possessions, but I also came away with a deeper joy in just knowing Jesus and making Him known than I had ever had before that time. Being a go-er changed how I lived right here at home and how I approached people with the gospel. Going will change you!

Going away from home actually serves to help you be more passionate about bringing the gospel back to your community. About 10 years ago I had a chance to help lead a Pastor's conference in India for about 300 Pastors. Many of the men who attended this conference came from hours away- some had walked for

days to get there. One night when I couldn't sleep due to jetlag I left the room in the compound they had us staying in and walked outside into the courtyard area where I found out all the men who had come to the conference were staying in rooms with concrete walls and floors. One of the men, who had to be in his late 70s or early 80s was sleeping on the ground with his head leaned up against a concrete pillar. These men were so hungry for biblical training that they endured a week of sleeping on the ground. It made me come home asking how hungry I am for Jesus. Going there changed me here.

We need to be people who are willing to follow Jesus by going to the nations.

Remember, accomplishing the Great Commission is an US thing, not a ME thing!

God may call individuals or families to go, but we all have to be committed to sending and supporting those who go. We also all have to be committed to accomplishing the mission of Jesus right here where we live, work and play.

This morning I want to introduce you to Bethany Lufi, who has served overseas as a missionary. I've asked her to share with us this morning what God's call on our life may look like to be someone who goes to another part of the world with the gospel as a missionary.

Interview Questions:

- When and how were you called to missions?
- What did you do to prepare?
- How did you determine where to go?
- What did you do and how were you financially supported?

Finally, as we close today I want to introduce you to Alison Fay. Alison is one of our high school students in the Student Ministry and this week she is leaving for a mission trip to Thailand! We want to take some time to pray over her this morning and to support her while she is on her trip. If God lays it on your heart to support Alison in prayer or even financially, please make sure you talk to her today! My understanding is her trip is paid for, but some additional funding for travel expenses and enjoyment is always nice!

- Pray for Alison and close in worship