

Missions Month



Part 4 - Sunday, February 23rd, 2020

Intro. RIDING IN DANNY'S HOT AIR BALLOON, seeing things from above gave me a new perspective of everything down below. I could see the "lay the land". That ride gave me a new perspective.

Now this is mission month. And through this series, "For the Sake of His Name" I've been trying to take you up into the hot air balloon of God's Word so we can all gain a new perspective on God's heart for the world...

Seeing things from a top-down perspective – His perspective, not from a bottom-up perspective – a man-centered perspective.

I'm trying to help us all get a feel for the "lay of the land" if you will on what our responsibility as Christians is, what we should be doing and giving ourselves to, and the challenge to becoming World Christians.

Pastor John Piper is a leading strategist in the evangelical Christian realm today in regards to God's heart for the world and our responsibility. Listen as he passionately shares what that is.

Clip: “John Piper – You Were Made for Global Missions” (2:12) (FADE AT 2:00)

We’ve learned that God’s heart beats for the world, that is, the peoples of the world.

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God’s Heart for the World Can Be See In...

1. God’s Priority – All of history is moving toward one goal: the worship of God and His Son by people from every tribe, language, and nation (Revelation 5:6-10; 7:9-10).

2. God’s Plan – The Bible reveals God’s plan (it IS the plan)
 - The Introduction: Genesis Chapters 1-11
 - The Plot: Genesis chapter 12 – the book of Jude
 - The Conclusion: Revelation

There’s a key verse that really captures God’s priority and it’s our memory verse for this series. Let’s say it out loud together...

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“All the nations you have made will come and bow down before you, Lord, and will honor your name.”

Psalm 86:9

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The Recurring Activity of God's Plan:

Step 1: God blesses* His people

Step 2: God gives them (us) the responsibility to bless others

The Result: God receives the glory and His plan is fulfilled

*To be "blessed" in Scripture means we've been given the privileged responsibility of being part of God's family and inviting others to join us.

This recurring activity of God's Plan and His heart for the world, for the nations of the world, is clearly seen from Genesis to Revelation. So far in this series we've only looked at it in Genesis and in a few other places in the Old Testament.

Let's go to the New Testament now and see how the life and ministry of Jesus reflects a continuation of the theme of the Old Testament that God loves the nations of the world.

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"Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying: "Sovereign Lord, as you have promised, you now dismiss your servant in peace. For my eyes have seen your salvation, which you have prepared in the sight of all people, a light for revelation to the Gentiles and for glory to your people Israel."

Luke 2:28-32

Simeon had been promised by God that he would see the Messiah before he died. When Jesus was born he praised God, recognizing that Jesus the Messiah would not only be a light to His own people the Jews, but also to the Gentiles, that is, the nations of the world.

At the beginning of His public ministry Jesus preached a sermon in His own hometown. In the sermon Jesus emphasized God's heart for people who weren't Jews, people from other nations.

The Jews, who were so nationalistic and smug in their status as God's privileged people, they got so mad at Jesus that He literally had to exercise His own power as deity to get away because it wasn't yet time for Him to die.

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"I tell you the truth," he continued, 'no prophet is accepted in his hometown. I assure you that there were many widows in Israel in Elijah's time, when the sky was shut for three and a half years and there was a severe famine throughout the land. Yet Elijah was not sent to any of them, but to a widow in Zarephath in the region of Sidon. And there were many in Israel with leprosy in the time of Elisha the prophet, yet not one of them was cleansed--only Naaman the Syrian.'

All the people in the synagogue were furious when they heard this. They got up, drove him out of the town, and took him to the brow of the hill on which the town was built, in order to throw him down the cliff. But he walked right through the crowd and went on his way."

Luke 4:24-30

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"On reaching Jerusalem, Jesus entered the temple area and began driving out those who were buying and selling there. He overturned the tables of the money changers and the benches of those selling doves, and would not allow anyone to carry merchandise through the temple courts. And as he taught them, he said, 'Is it not written: " 'My house will be called a house of prayer for all nations'? But you have made it 'a den of robbers.'"

Mark 11:15-17

Jesus chased the money changes out of the court of the Gentiles in the temple complex in Jerusalem. Why? There were several reasons, but the main one was because the court of the Gentiles was God's allowance in the Jewish religion for the inclusion of the peoples of the world.

It was meant to be a place where non-Jews could come and find mercy from God as they sought him in prayer. But the Jews of Jesus' day had turned this part of the temple complex into an annex of money exchange, crass commercialism and a beehive of greed and dishonesty.

This so infuriated Jesus – that God's chosen people had come to misunderstand why God has blessed them, and had turned their backs on the nations of the world that God loves, that 3 years later, right before He was crucified, He did it again over in Matthew 21 as one of his last acts before his death.

The Jewish people may have turned their backs on their God-given responsibility to be a blessing to the nations, but God hadn't turned His back on the peoples of the world.

In Matthew chapter 8 a Roman centurion – a non-Jew – came to Jesus asking Him to heal his servant who was near death. Jesus used this occasion to remind the Jewish people of God's inclusion of all the nations in the world in His eternal kingdom...

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“When Jesus heard this, he was astonished and said to those following him, “I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then Jesus said to the centurion, “Go! It will be done just as you believed it would.” And his servant was healed at that very hour.”

Matthew 8:10-13

Jesus wanted the Jews to know that Gentiles are not going to be wedding crashers in God’s kingdom someday. They’ve been part of God’s plans for His kingdom since the very beginning.

We could look at more of these kinds of passages in the life and ministry of Jesus, but let’s go over to the granddaddy of them all – the most famous one of all – Matthew 28. READ vs. 18-20.

We call this the Great Commission. All the activities of Jesus’3-year ministry and everything He taught comes to a head right here at the end of His time here on earth, some of His last words before departing back to heaven after His resurrection.

So let me give you a number of fact statements that are based on Jesus command:

1. The heart of Jesus' command is that we should disciple all nations – all people (ethnic groups) - in the world.

The Great Commission is a command. In the Greek it literally means “to produce disciples”. It’s an action phrase that has as it’s object to make disciples of “all nations”.

We’ve already seen in our study that the words “all nations” in the Greek is “TA ETHNE” meaning, ethnic or people groups. So the Great Commission of Jesus is a command for all His followers to make disciples of all the people groups of the world.

2. It is impossible for a church to claim that it is fulfilling Christ’s mission that all people groups be disciplined if it is neglecting the nations (ethnic people groups) of the world.

While we have a responsibility to make disciples right here in our own culture, at the same time we have the responsibility of taking the gospel to other cultures, other people groups and making disciples among them as well.

And if we’re not doing that, we are not fulfilling Christ’s mission because His mission is incomplete until ALL peoples, ALL nations, have the gospel and have disciples among them who are sharing the gospel.

Now Jesus also tells us what a disciple of His looks like and how to make disciples...

3. A disciple of Jesus Christ is a person who has identified with Christ personally through salvation, publicly through baptism and is seeking to not only know His commands but to obey them.

A disciple of Jesus isn't someone who calls themselves a Christian but shows no outer expression of their faith. A disciple of Jesus is someone who both personally identifies with Him by faith through salvation, then expresses that faith publicly by being baptized.

Baptism is the first step of obedience for someone who has placed their faith in Christ for salvation. But it's not the last step. A disciple also is engaged in learning about Christ and His commands in the Bible and is seeking to obey those commands.

So a disciple of Jesus is someone who has been saved, baptized, and is learning and living in obedience to Christ and His Word. (BAPTISM NEXT SUNDAY)

And what does the Bible call a group of people who have been saved, baptized and are learning and obeying His commands? A CHURCH!

So let's define our task as a church based on God's heart for the nations that we've seen in the Old Testament and in Jesus' ministry and teaching...

4. The Mission: To initiate a church-planting movement that will make saved, baptized and obedient followers of Christ in every distinct people group committed to and capable of propagating the gospel throughout that entire culture – and eventually to other cultures as well.

Now let's talk about where we are collectively as the church of Jesus Christ in getting the Gospel to the all the peoples of the world. Let's start with the good news. Look at your handout "FROM EVERY NATION". (READ)

It's really good news that today and every day approximately 40,000 people around the globe come to faith in Christ for salvation. If that blesses your heart, say "Amen". (CROSS IS LIT TODAY!!!)

But the tough reality is that against those 40,000 new people who will come to faith in Christ today, almost 160,000 people – 4x the number of new believers - will die around the globe. And at the same time over 353,000 new babies will be born today.

There's more. Remember I showed you a video 2 weeks ago detailing God's heart for the nations, nations being ethnic people groups.

Then last Sunday I showed you a clip detailing the over 17,000 people groups of the world and what Unreached People groups are and how many there are...

And we talked about the major religions in the world that are taking people away from God and away from salvation and eternal life in heaven.

Remember the THUMB? THUMB is an acronym for the religious bent of the people around the world who live in an unreached people group.

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T-ribal (Animism)

H – Hindu

U – unreligious

M – Muslim

B – Buddhism

Let's delve even deeper in understanding just how lost our world is and where we are as the church of Jesus Christ in rising up to Christ's challenge and His command to disciple all peoples for the sake of His name.

CLIP: "State of the World – The Task Remaining (HD)" (4:36)

Some of the information from that clip is on the back of your notes. I encourage you to read that when you get home. But let's just briefly recap what we just heard and saw...

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The State of the World

33% of the world identifies themselves as Christian (not all are)

38% of the world have access to the gospel but have chosen not to follow Christ

29% of the world have never heard about Christ or the Gospel and currently have no chance of hearing about Him (2-3 billion people)

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The Missionary Force

Of the approximately 400,000 Christian missionaries...

72% are ministering among those who identify as Christians

25% are ministering among the those who have access but have chosen not to follow Christ

3% are ministering among the 2 billion who have never heard and have no chance of hearing about Christ

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Finances

Christians give only 2% of their income to kingdom causes

Of that 2%, just over 6% is used for missions work (the other 94% is used to service the needs of the church)

87% of the 6% goes to those in the world that identify as Christians

12% of the 6% goes to those who have access but have chosen not to follow Christ

Less than 1% of the 6% is used to take the gospel to those who have never heard

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2 Billion people are still waiting to hear the good news of the Gospel of Jesus Christ

What are WE going to do to change that?

What are YOU going to do?

We're going to talk more in the next couple of weeks about what each of us can do and what we can do together. But surely the most basic and effective action step each of us can take is to pray.