

Today we're going to talk about the topic of "mission." I want to show you how Jesus understood mission, read part of the greatest speech that you maybe have never heard, and explain why this bag has everything to do with both. But first, I need to tell you about something strange that happens each year in a small, French village.

In the south of France is a small village called Barjols. Every January 17 it hosts a bizarre festival. The festival is in honor of a saint named Saint Marcel. Marcel was a well-known 6th century monk. After returning from a trip to Rome to visit the Pope, he died and was buried at the monastery. The story goes that as people flocked to his grave, favor and miracles occurred. He was later venerated to sainthood.

In the 14th century, the body of St. Marcel was brought to Barjols in hopes that the relics of this saint would prosper the village. As they enter the village with the remains of Saint Marcel, the procession encounters women who are preparing a food called tripe. (The women are called, "les trippettes".) The tripe was for a festival to commemorate the provision of food during a famine years earlier. So they enter the village together: the remains of Saint Marcel and the tripe-bearers.

So, here's what happens on January 17 in Barjols: the morning begins with a service in the city's cathedral. It's standing room only, and there is an aura of seriousness, almost somberness. After the service, you exit to the courtyard outside of the cathedral. Everyone from the village is standing outside. The somber music continues with drummers, wind instruments, and stringed instruments, and a huge bust of Saint Marcel on poles is paraded through the crowd.

And then something strange happens.

The serious music pauses with an anticipatory pause. Listening, you realize that something new is about to happen. Before you finish the thought, the instruments start a different tune: upbeat with downbeats. The bust of St. Marcel starts moving up and down as the people carrying it jump up and down. Suddenly everyone around you—regardless of age, occupation, dressed in their "Sunday best," packed shoulder to shoulder in a crowd around the square—starts to jump up and down. It's a party! As they jump, they sing, "St. Marcel, St. Marcel, les trippettes, les

trippettes," over and over. It's captivating, funny, and completely bizarre. And it's the perfect picture of mission.

Mission is transformative action in response to a compelling message. We know about mission. You have a mission statement at the place where you work. Your company hopes that you are captured by an idea of how the world can be different because of what you do. You have mission for your children. You may not think of it that way, but you have desires of how you hope your children will be in the world.

But here's the problem: Is it worth our efforts? Will it be good?

When it comes to Jesus, He had a mission. He wasn't trying to start a new religion. He gave His life to start a movement. He believed that the story of God at work in the world had the power to change the world. And He called people to join Him in a mission worth their energy.

Mission is a transformative action in response to a compelling message. As we look at Jesus and His perspective on mission, I want you to consider that there is a mission worth your energy. If you join that mission, you have the potential to bring good in a world that desperately needs good news.

What was Distinctive about Jesus's View of Mission?

After this the Lord appointed seventy-two others and sent them two by two ahead of him to every town and place where he was about to go. (Luke 10:1)

Three things stand out. First, location. Jesus viewed wherever He was as an opportunity to participate in the mission of his heavenly father. Every setting could be filled with purpose.

The second distinctive of Jesus' view on mission was the message. The central message of Jesus' life on earth was the kingdom of God. The kingdom of God is what life is like when God is in charge. It is the rule and reign of God. We see this in verses 9 and 11, and we see it throughout Jesus' teaching. Mark, one of the other writers of Jesus' life on earth, describes Jesus' opening statement to his ministry: "Repent, for the kingdom of God is near." Repent means to turn around. In other words, you been living one way but now there is a new way to live—the way God would live on earth. Here is the unique claim about Jesus: the way of God is happening in and through Him.

The third distinctive of Jesus' view of mission is people. Jesus involves people. He is appointing 72 people to join the mission of God. A bit of background: Jesus had 12 disciples who were close to Him, who asked questions, who could dialogue with Jesus. He had three who were very close and with whom He spent the most time. But He doesn't send those 12 or even those 3. Jesus sends 72 people from the crowd that follow this ministry. In other words, they are normal people. They may not have all the answers, but they believe that God is doing something through Jesus.

Not only does Jesus involve people, but the mission is for people: Jesus sending the 72 to homes of real people, with real lives, real struggles, real dreams and hopes. He is announcing that God has not forgotten them. Jesus sees mission as incredibly valuable.

What was the Problem with the Mission?

He told them, "The harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field. (v. 2)

But there's a problem with the mission. Jesus uses a farming illustration. Imagine a harvest ready to be gathered. If not gathered, the harvest will be lost. Jesus says the that mission is ready to start; people proclaiming the kingdom message can do something that will change the world. The harvest is plentiful; in other words, the stage is set for something great to happen in the lives of people. This is why I'm excited for this relaunch; this is why Hilary and I moved here; we have an opportunity to do something that hasn't been done. We can be something that is unique in the world; we can be the church that Jesus ignited the church to be.

But there is a problem. The problem is that there are many not involved in the mission. There are only a few people involved in a task that is the calling of many. There are many people not announcing and enacting God's kingdom on earth. This is not a "religious vs. irreligious" issue. It's a "participating vs. not participating" issue.

We can see that in what Jesus says next. He says to the 72 to ask that God the Father would "send out" people to participate in the mission. The word in the original Greek language for "sent out" is the word *ekballo*. *Ekballo* means to compel people to participate. If you have raised funding, managed an event, or led volunteers, you know what it means to *ekballo* people. When we were in Charlotte, Hilary worked with a non-profit to rescue women from human trafficking. She spoke at Rotary Club meetings and various business to create awareness of and funding for the

work. *Ekballo* is to stir people to join your cause. God compels people to join His mission.

Jesus knows how His Father works; watch what Jesus does next.

Jesus Puts Mission in Motion

Go! I am sending you out like lambs among wolves. (v. 3)

Jesus says He is sending the 72. The word here, however, is different than in the verse. In verse two, the Father *ekballo*s; here, the Greek word is *apostello*. *Apostello* means to send with purpose. This is where we get the English word, apostle. Apostle means "sent one." In fact, Jesus is referred to as an Apostle, a Sent One (Hebrews 3:1). The One sent to fulfill the mission of His heavenly Father is now sending people who follow Him to participate in the mission of God the Father.

This displays the progression that Jesus sees for those who follow Him. The Biblical writers describe the followers of Jesus as disciples, which means "student or learner." Jesus moves His followers from disciples to apostles, from students to sent ones. For Jesus, learning is not the end goal; sending is (Matthew 28 and Acts 1). Jesus doesn't give them homework but a mission. Jesus was not interested in making people more religious. He was interested in getting people sent so that they could have more of an impact in the world. If you're a follower of Jesus, this is your calling. You are not only a disciple but also a sent one. Your calling is to go where God sends you to bring about the kingdom of God.

Then Jesus says something interesting to the 72: as they go in the mission of God, they go as "lambs among wolves." What does Jesus mean by this image of a lamb? I think Jesus is reminding them of two things. First, there is a danger or challenge in participating in the mission of God. A lamb is a young sheep, and a young sheep would be no match for a wolf. A few weeks ago, I was walking my dog early in the morning around a cul-de-sac. In the middle of the cul-de-sac was a rock structure median. Sitting on the rock median was a young coyote. My dog thought this strange animal was a new friend; the coyote thought my dog was breakfast! As we entered the cul-de-sac, I repositioned my body between my dog and this threat. If it came at us, I was ready to drop kick it into the next neighborhood. Jesus tells the 72 that there will be danger and challenge in following God's mission. It shouldn't be that way, but that is how the world works. They were already told in verse two that they would be alone; the challenges will increase.

Second, Jesus uses the image of a lamb to remind them that they are under the care of a God who loves them and cares for them. The image of a lamb appears throughout the Biblical writings.

God is pictured as a shepherd who cares for His people as a shepherd would care for sheep. The prophet Isaiah beautifully describes this relationship in Isaiah 40:11: God tends, leads, carries, and gently leads His people. One of the most famous passages in the Bible—Psalm 23—begins with the statement: “The Lord is my Shepherd.” The Psalmist places himself as a sheep and God as His loving shepherd.

In the teaching of Jesus, He draws on this image. In John 10:11, Jesus says that He is the good shepherd. People can know the loving care of their Shepherd because He has come to His people. In the moments of doubt, isolation and fear, you and I have the gift of Jesus who is the good shepherd. And if we're curious how He shepherds, He tells us: He shepherds us with sacrificial love. In a world that constantly demands our production before it is pleased, that builds new steps for us to climb in order to be near, here is how God acts toward you: He sacrifices so that you can receive life. No one does for you what God has done for you. And He does so that you can be in relationship with Him. This is the God who calls you into His mission.

Mission is a transformative action in response to a compelling message. This week, I want to challenge you to join the mission of God by asking yourself two questions.

Where is God Already Working?

As we re-launch into this new context, we have been asking this question. One area that stood out was teachers. If you are a teacher, God is at work as you shape the lives of our children. As the son of a teacher, I have seen firsthand the cost and sacrifice involved in your work. We want to do something to say to teachers in this city that we are thinking of you and that we support you.

Next week, we are going to stuff these bags with items as a gift to 80 elementary school teachers in Redwood City. The goal is to simply say that we support you in the incredible work that you do for the next generation.

Where Does the Kingdom of God Need to be Made Known?

We saw the need for the kingdom of God in the heart-wrenching events that took place last week in Charlottesville. In a town two hours from where I attended college and not far from where I grew up, I, like you, watched and read with horror people driven by hate.

Let's be clear: racism is not what Jesus and His church are about. You cannot stand in hate and claim to stand with Jesus. In His day, Jesus battled racism. Jesus battled the cultural divisions of insiders vs outsiders. And Jesus passionately declared in word

and deed that all people matter to God. His death on the cross was a death for all people of all races because all people matter to God.

In fact, when John, one of Jesus' closest followers, describes what heaven looks like, he writes in Revelation 7:9, that standing at the throne of God are people from every nation, tribe, and language. Heaven is filled with people of all races and cultures because they are people for whom Christ died.

If you are standing in hate, you are not standing with Jesus. The people who stand with Jesus are people who stand against racism and hate in every form. The people who stand with Jesus are people who announce and enact in the world that we all matter because we all matter to God. You and I join the mission of Jesus by loving people because they are someone for whom Christ died.

If you support where God is at work, if you speak and act in areas where His kingdom needs to reign, you will bring good to a world that desperately needs to hear good news.

To be a part of mission isn't easy. You may be alone. You may face difficulties. You may be surrounded by circumstances and people who work to draw your eyes from the beauty of the summit to the problem with the path. That is why the story of Jesus is so compelling. We need to hear again that we were created to join a story bigger than our story.

We Choose to Go to the Moon

Fifty years ago, a newly elected President stood in a stadium in Houston, Texas. His world was recovering from a World War and in the midst of a Cold War. The rules of how the world worked were evolving with enormous speed. The next frontier was something previously unimaginable—space. And the United States was already behind in the mission.

On that day, John F. Kennedy gave one of his most powerful speeches. He inspired the country with a compelling mission to do something that had never been done before—and to do it within seven years. Listen to his words of passion for the mission:

“We choose to go to the moon!...We choose to go to the moon in this decade and do the other things, not because they are easy, but because they are hard; because that goal will serve to organize and measure the best of our energies and skills, because that challenge is one that we are willing to accept, one we are unwilling to postpone, and one we intend to win.

“Many years ago the great British explorer George Mallory, who was to die on Mount Everest, was asked why did he want to climb it. He said, 'Because it is there.' Well, space is there, and we're going to climb it, and the moon and the planets are

there, and new hopes for knowledge and peace are there. And, therefore, as we set sail we ask God's blessing on the most hazardous and dangerous and greatest adventure on which man has ever embarked."

That's mission. Mission is not a task among other tasks. It is wherever Jesus is, involving people, proclaiming that Jesus is Lord. Mission is something that you give yourself to join because by doing so, you have the potential to change the world.

This manuscript represents the bulk of what was preached at CPC South. For further detail, please refer to the audio recording of this sermon.

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