

Acts 8:1-25

The Missional Church

Introduction: The Book of Acts is the history of the earliest Christians and what we see from the earliest pages of Acts is that the early church was a church on mission. Nowadays everyone has a mission, and every company has a mission statement. But this was actually a term first used by Christians. We get our English word mission from the Latin *Missio* meaning to send. It was the early Christians understanding that the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ was a sending God. The one who had sent his son into the world.

The concept of the *Missio Dei* (the mission of God) is recognition that God is a sending God and the church is a sent people. It is the most important mission in the scriptures. Jesus Christ is the embodiment of that mission; the Holy Spirit is the power of that mission; the Church is the instrument of that mission; and the culture is the context in which that mission occurs.

God is a missionary God in this culture and in every culture. His nature does not change with location. Therefore, a missionary posture and mindset should be the normal expression of the church in all times and places.

The church in every generation needs to realize and reclaim that mission is its fundamental identity.

Jesus said, **“As the father has sent me, I am sending you”** (John 20:21) or in Matthew 28 **“And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age’.”**

Remember Jesus had told the Disciples early in the Acts narrative that they would be his witnesses in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth.

What we begin to see in Acts 8 is this co-mission become a reality. (Acts outline- Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the earth) So according to Acts 8 what does it look like to be on Mission?

1. Organic - A People's Mission

1. "Now those who were scattered went about preaching the word."

1. Though Luke does follow and highlight the ministry of main characters in Acts such as Peter, and Paul - even in this chapter The Apostles Peter and John do eventually come down to Samaria and affirm what God is doing and the Spirit is given to those who believe, and also those who believe are baptized into the faith - just so it's clear that Philip hasn't gone rogue.)
2. Luke want us to that there is an underlying narrative of members of the early church doing much of the evangelism and ministry of the Gospel. The word that Luke uses here (vs.4) for preach or preaching is not like what I'm doing this morning. It is a much less formal word, it's more like spreading news or spreading gossip. After all the word gospel (good news) carried with it the idea of something great that had happened and would change the course of history and people's everyday lives; like a war ending or a new king coming to power.
3. Notice again what Luke has told us -those who were scattered went about preaching -that is everyone but the Apostles - it's all the normal everyday people who are doing the work of evangelism, and spreading this good news.
4. In the book of Acts, virtually everyone evangelizes - that doesn't mean that they are all street preachers, or apologist, gifted evangelist, or anything like that, but it does mean that these people talk about who Jesus is and what he has done everywhere they go.
5. Before this all we've heard from is the Apostles and Stephen. But in one day (because of the death of Stephen and mass persecution) the church went from being a community of consumers to a community of providers. a community of hearers to a community of proclaimers!
 1. Philip went down to Samaria. Maybe he had some personal reasons, maybe he didn't. Nothing in the text indicates that Philip was sent out by a committee or by the Apostles or a church planting ministry. Philip didn't "get permission". But he most definitely knew the words of Jesus -"**you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and**

to the end of the earth.” So he went. He took Jesus at his word, he took Jesus seriously, and guess what - God showed up and many people were healed and delivered from spiritual oppression and many were brought to salvation and that City experienced JOY!

2. **What’s my point?** Missional living means that each one of us are ministers of the gospel everywhere we are and everywhere we go, we don’t need to be sent, or get Elder or church approval - we’ve already have been sent by Jesus himself. The Apostle Peter says to the Church **“you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into His wonderful light” (1 Peter 2:9)**
3. Maybe like Philip God has burdened you with a specific ministry or a specific people group. Maybe he hasn’t, but here’s the truth - if you are a Christian you have been sent by God to your city, to your neighborhood, to your friends and family, coworkers and neighbors to share the good news about God’s coming kingdom and his Messiah. Missional living means that evangelism isn’t a box we check off but a way of life. It’s our identity. We don’t witness we are witnesses.
4. Because of our identity (corporately and individually) in Christ we are to continue the mission of Jesus to proclaim the Kingdom of God. “There is no participating in Christ without participation in his mission to the world.” - James Scherer
5. British Apologist and Theologian Michael Green, says, the explosive growth of the early church, “was in reality accomplished by means of informal missionaries.” That is, Christian laypeople - not trained preachers and evangelists - carried on the mission of the church not through formal preaching but informal conversation - “in homes and wine shops, on walks, and around market stalls..they did it naturally and enthusiastically.

2. Incarnational - contextualizes the message of the Gospel.

1. Samaritans were considered half breeds by the Jews. (they were in fact a mixture of Jew/Gentile ethnicity) They were looked down on as you can guess from Jesus’ parable about the Good

Samaritan. I love how this does not stop Philip - (side note - following the leading of the Spirit might often take us places we'd never expect to be, never unbiblical, but often culturally unacceptable. But such is the case when we are following Jesus.)

2. Part of the Jewish attitude towards Samaritans was based on the fact that the Samaritans rejected the worship of Yahweh at the temple in Jerusalem and they rejected the Jewish scripture - all but the Torah. They awaited a "prophet like Moses", who would come before the day of Judgment. and set everything right. Not only that but they also mixed their religion with magic or the dark arts -as chapter 8 introduces us to Simon the magician. This apparently resulted in all kinds of spiritual oppression for the Samaritan people. We as Christians believe that there is power in magic, the occult, and also in other religions the problem is that it's not good power and it leaves people in bondage to all sorts of chaos and fear...Also it does not compare to the liberating power of God as we see here.
 1. Philip when he came to Samaria he preached the Christ - the anointed one that God sent into the world to be Savior and Lord, and the good news about the Kingdom (God's restoration of all things through Jesus).
 1. Now Acts has already connected Jesus multiple times to the "Prophet like Moses" and the one through whom the new age of the kingdom is coming to pass and no doubt this is what Philip did as well. He met the people of Samria on their terms and showed how Jesus was the ultimate answer to all their hopes and longings.
 2. **This is what it means to be missional in our sharing the gospel** - It is to connect our city's or our culture's idols or meta- narrative and show how the plot-lines of their lives can only find resolutions or happy endings in Jesus. We need to show how the main promises secular culture makes regarding meaning, satisfaction, freedom, and identity can't be fulfilled. We must retell the culture's story in Jesus.
 3. To be missional is to connect people's story to the story of God. Broken people can know the one that carried all the pain and suffering of the world, and was broken - not because of his own faults but because of the faults of

others, He was broken for them. The poor can know the one who became poor so that ultimately and eternally they can become rich. To those who have never been loved or accepted that they can know the one who was despised and rejected so they can be ultimately loved and accepted.

1. What are the idols or meta-narratives of Sonoma county and how is Jesus the answer to the hopes and longings of our city and culture? It is the church's mission to make these connections to contextualize the gospel for our city.

3. Demonstrational - Missional living is not just words but deeds.

1. But Missional living is not just words or sharing the Gospel but also about deeds - showing the power of the gospel with a transformed life.
 1. Philip's preaching also came with signs or demonstrations of the power and reality of God's restorative kingdom - both physical healing (The paralyzed and lame) and spiritual healing (unclean spirits came out of many who had them).
 1. **“And the crowds with one accord paid attention to what was being said by Philip, when they heard him and saw the signs that he did.”** When did the crowd listen? When they saw the signs. The words are backed up by the deeds
 2. When our city, when outsiders, see us pouring ourselves out for the physical material needs of people and when it sees people in our community being transformed spiritually - emotional/psychologically then people will listen to our words. People often need to see the life of Jesus in action before they listen to the words or message of Jesus. If the city doesn't see this transformation, this increase in the quality of life for our members but also for our surrounding community, then the it just sees us as an exclusive club that exist for itself. But the church does not exist for itself but to proclaim and make know the kingdom to the world - through word and deed.
 3. Our church community, the church at large, should be a place where people receive both physical and spiritual, material and economic help. I believe that we should use whatever tools we have necessary to build bridges for the sharing of the gospel and showing what the kingdom of God looks like in action.

1. Missio Dei, is the idea that God is actively working to restore his creation to wholeness - this he does through his church- we are the body of Christ, his presence on earth, empowered by his Spirit. This wholeness that God brings looks like Jesus and is our intended expression as human beings designed in the image of God.
2. Now Look at what it says about the result of Philip's ministry -**“So there was much joy in that city.”** It doesn't just say that those who believed experienced joy - but that the city experienced joy. This should be the result of every church in every place - that it is a joy to the city, it is a blessing. The Church should be a group of people who love to do good, to help others, to bless, to make peace, to be generous, to bring healing and hope, reconciliation and forgiveness. A people of convictional kindness.
 1. God told the Israelites who were captives and foreigners in Babylon to seek the prosperity and peace of that city, for in it's peace they would have peace. How much more should God's kingdom people seek to bring signs and displays of God's kingdom to the city they live in!
 2. “If the gospel is to challenge the public life of our society, if Christians are to occupy the "high ground" which they vacated in the noon time of "modernity," it will not be by forming a Christian political party, or by aggressive propaganda campaigns. Once again it has to be said that there can be no going back to the "Constantinian" era. It will only be by movements that begin with the local congregation in which the reality of the new creation is present, known, and experienced, and from which men and women will go into every sector of public life to claim it for Christ, to unmask the illusions which have remained hidden and to expose all areas of public life to the illumination of the gospel. But that will only happen as and when local congregations renounce an introverted concern for their own life, and recognize that they exist for the sake of those who are not members, as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society.” - Leslie Newbigin

Conclusion: How did this all come about? Salvation, physical and spiritual healing, joy to the city, not to mention huge racial reconciliation (Jews going to minister and serve those consider half-breeds)...If you think about it - Joy, life and hope was brought to Samaria only because there was the death of one man. Without Stephen's death and the scattering of the Jesus movement Philip would have never gone and who knows what would have happened.

So also, salvation, life, hope, exceeding Joy has come to each one of us through the death of one man.....Look at this pattern in scripture.. Joy, life, hope, comes through a death... Jesus himself said, **“Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.”** - **John 12:23-26**

What do I mean? Well I believe for each of us there must also be a kind of suffering or death in order to see the mission of Jesus carried out here. There will be a real denial of self, a crucifying of our will to follow his will ... maybe the death of our pride, our reputation, maybe the loss of friendships.. whatever it might be that hinders us from following Jesus' in his mission.

But think of him....think upon our indebtedness to him. Is he not worthy? Is he not beautiful? Don't you want people to know the goodness, grace and truth that are in Jesus?

As we think on him, may his glory, goodness, love and grace break in on our so that we stirred up to join him in his mission to the world.