

Strengths Theology - 07b

God is Our Mission

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Introduction Statement:

The mission God has for mankind has never really changed. From the very beginning God has assigned mankind the same mission. There in the Garden of Eden, before man rebelled against God in a sin of disobedience, mankind was told what God wanted him to do and the direction He wanted them to go.

Understand Mission and Goal:

The dictionary defines **MISSION** as "a task assigned; the act or instance of sending." (**DICTIONARY**) A mission tells us what to do and sends us out to do it. A mission statement should include the vision of the big picture that shows a finale that lets us know when the mission is complete.

The dictionary defines **GOAL** as "the end toward which effort is directed." (**DICTIONARY**) A goal tells us how to accomplish the mission. A goal gives us a vision which is often seen as smaller steps of action to take, in order to accomplish the mission.

Mission includes the following two important things

- An Assignment
- A Vision of the completed mission, the big picture

Goal includes the following

- Action Steps
- A Vision of smaller parts of the total mission. These smaller parts seem easier to accomplish because they are not as overwhelming as the vision of the total mission.

Let's look at Christ's mission statement to His church again.

Acts 1:4-8 (NASB)

[4] Gathering them together, He commanded them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait for what the Father had promised, "Which," He said, "you heard of from Me; [5] for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now."

[6] So when they had come together, they were asking Him, saying, "Lord, is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?" [7] He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; [8] but you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

It seems overwhelming, even unfair for Christ to ask us to bring the love of God, through the Gospel message, to the entire world. But that is the mission He has given His Body the Church. Knowing how overwhelming this might seem to us He gives us some goals to accomplish. These goals give us a roadmap to follow so we can work at accomplishing the mission one step at a time instead of trying to do it all at once, which of course is impossible.

- The first Goal is assumed. He is talking to His disciples, those who have accepted His message and are waiting to be filled with the power of the Holy Spirit. This is the necessary first step in propagating the love of God to the entire world. (Take care of yourself first.)
- The second Goal (step) is to be witnesses of the love of God in Jerusalem. (Take care of your home town next.)
- The third Goal (step) is to be witnesses of the love of God in Judea. (Take care of your state next.)
- The third Goal (step) is to be witnesses of the love of God in Samaria. (Move out beyond your state or country next.)
- The third Goal (step) is to be witnesses of the love of God until you reach the remotest part of the earth. (As you move out further and further you will eventually reach the ends of the earth.)

Understanding God's Mission:

Christ had His own part or role to play in the **Mission** God had for the world He created. It came to a climax when on the final week of His life here on earth. He entered Jerusalem on a donkey with all the people shouting and proclaiming Him to be their King. He had one final week to talk to and instruct His disciples and then He was tortured and murdered on a cross. Three days later He came out of the grave and soon after that He ascended to heaven. Oh, by the way, He's coming back again.

Today we begin the celebration of the completion of Jesus mission here on earth by recognizing Palm Sunday. In the perspective of time, His mission here on earth was only a small step in all that had happened and will happen in God's mission to have relationship with His creation.

- To show mankind what it means to be in perfect fellowship and relationship with Him, God placed man in the Garden of Eden and provided for all of his needs. In fact the experience of man in the Garden of Eden is a good vision of the finale that will complete God's mission for mankind. Listen to Don Francisco's song [As It Was In The Beginning](#) some time. As you listen to this song Think about God creating a new heaven and a new earth at the end of this world tainted by sin. (Check it out at www.donfrancisco.com)
- To show the seriousness of sin God instituted the law and the sacrificial system whereby mankind could live in fellowship with Him in spite of their sinfulness. But the law reveals to mankind that he cannot keep the law, he is utterly sinful

and needs God's salvation. **(Ro 7:4-13)**

- Then God sent His Son Jesus to pay the price for sin for all of mankind in all generations. Bringing Jesus out of the grave gives us a glimpse of our destiny as Christians.
- Then God sent the Holy Spirit to come along side believers to guide and empower them toward the end. You see God knew that in order to defeat sin, mankind would need help.
- One day God will come back to claim His church and bring them to a new Garden of Eden.

All of these are steps toward the completion of God's ultimate mission – to live in fellowship with His creation. The celebration of Palm Sunday and Easter is the celebration of the accomplishment of a goal that God had set, that would eventually lead to the completion of His ultimate mission.

Understanding Our Mission and Goal:

Now I don't want you to think that I am deliberately repeating myself as I talk about our mission but I must give you what the Holy Spirit gives me as I study during the week. We really need to understand that Christ has a mission for you and I in this modern day and we need to express that mission in a way that is understandable to us today. Our Mission Statement...

Investing In Eternity

(The acronym **A-C-T-S** explains our Mission Statement)

- The assignment: **INVEST**
- The vision: **ETERNITY**

Aquire the investment already made for me through Jesus Christ (The Pursuit of Salvation through the blood of Christ.)

Continue to invest (The Pursuit of spiritual growth through a moment by moment personal relationship with God.)

Take the investment home (To Bring the love of God home to Family and close Friends.)

Share the investment with others (To Share Christ through Love, Relationships, Fellowship, Community Service, Giving, Sacrifice, and Evangelism.)

Our mission statement and the action steps formulated by the acronym **ACTS** is a copy of the mission statement Jesus gave His Body the Church. Yes it has been worded for us in modern phrasing so we understand it in a more modern and personal way, but it is what Jesus wanted of His church in the original Mission Statement to His Church. Now I want you to know that when we worked on what our mission statement would be for Mt. View we did not talk about all of this detail about the theology of the Mission Jesus gave His church. We prayed and asked God to guide us in the mission statement He had for us. As I look at the Mission Statement that God helped us to formulate, I

noticed that it matches His perfectly. That is because He was working in our hearts and minds to guide us to where He wants us to go as a local congregation.

It is also important to understand that God's mission for mankind has never changed. God still wants mankind to do the very thing He asked us to do in the Garden of Eden soon after the creation.

Understanding God's Mission for Mankind:

We do not have time to go down through all of the history that includes all of the steps God has taken to accomplish His mission but we do need to see that it does run throughout history. We are part of that history and that is why we have been given a mission from God. His mission for us is his way of working in the world today. We carry out His mission in our personal lives and every day actions. As we go back to the beginning and progress into the history of God's actions to accomplish His mission we see simplicity. God meant for His relationship with His creatures to be simple. But as mankind refused to follow God's simple mission and goals, and as time progresses things become complicated. It will be helpful to go back to the beginning when God's mission and His goals were first stated to mankind. Let's start at the creation and take a brief look at God's mission and what He has done so far to complete that mission.

God's original mission for man:

Genesis 2:15-17 (NASB)

[15] Then the LORD God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it. [16] The LORD God commanded the man, saying, "From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; [17] but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die."

What was the mission, the assignment God gave Adam in the garden? Cultivate the garden, eat freely, and don't eat of the tree of knowledge of good and evil. Pretty simple isn't it.

When sin entered the world things got more complicated. Because of his sin mankind added more and more to what had to be done to accomplish the mission to have relationship and fellowship with God.

Man's response to God's mission:

In Genesis chapter three we see the fall of mankind, sin enters the world. So God must alter the plan for accomplishing His mission of having relationship and fellowship with mankind. Mankind must understand that life outside of fellowship with the creator is devastating. Life without the creator is at best very frustrating. It is sprinkled with moments of temporary joy and elation, but dominated by seemingly endless periods of defeat and oppression. So God makes His next move.

Genesis 3:22-24 (NASB)

[22] Then the LORD God said, "Behold, the man has become like one of Us,

knowing good and evil; and now, he might stretch out his hand, and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever”— [23] therefore the LORD God sent him out from the garden of Eden, to cultivate the ground from which he was taken. [24] So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the **way** (this is the Hebrew word that is translated as mission) to the tree of life.

What's the assignment? The angel was to guard the tree of eternal life. Instead of the tree of eternal life, Adam and Eve ate of the tree of knowledge of good and evil in rebellion against God's one commandment. It was the tree of eternal life that God had made for man. This was God's mission for man, eternal life. Now, at least for a time, the way to the tree of eternal life is blocked, God has altered His plan.

Let's go a little further into human history.

Man's rebellion against God's mission:

Genesis 6:11-12 (NASB)

[11] Now the earth was corrupt in the sight of God, and the earth was filled with violence. [12] God looked on the earth, and behold, it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their **way** (this is the Hebrew word that is translated as mission) upon the earth.

What's the assignment or mission? The **way** in which mankind was to walk, the **way** in which they were to live their lives was the assignment God had given them. Instead of taking the **way** to eternal life, they had corrupted their **way** and rebelled against God. Now they are on a different path, they have chosen a different **way**, a different mission. It is a mission that is leading down a slippery slope toward destruction. Now things have become very complicated. Would it not have been better to just cultivate the beautiful garden and avoid this one tree? That first simple assignment from God, that first mission was a simple statement about how God wanted mankind to live their daily lives. That was the **way** God had given them. Enjoy His resources and obey His simple commandment. From time to time in history there have been those who have chosen to follow God's mission and from time to time in history there have been those who have preferred to go their own way, to rebel against God.

Let's go a little further into human history.

Man decides to embrace God's mission:

Joshua 1:1-9 (NASB)

[Jos 1:1] Now it came about after the death of Moses the servant of the LORD, that the LORD spoke to Joshua the son of Nun, Moses' servant, saying, [2] "Moses My servant is dead; now therefore **arise, cross this Jordan**, you and all this people, **to the land which I am giving to them**, (cultivate the garden) to the sons of Israel. [3] "Every place on which the sole of your foot treads, I have given it to you, just as I spoke to Moses. [4] "From the wilderness and this Lebanon, even as far as the great river, the river Euphrates, all the land of the Hittites, and as far as the Great

Sea toward the setting of the sun will be your territory. (The new Garden of Eden, enjoy all the fruit) [5] "No man will be able to stand before you all the days of your life. Just as I have been with Moses, I will be with you; I will not fail you or forsake you. [6] "Be strong and courageous, for you shall give this people possession of the land which I swore to their fathers to give them. [7] "Only be strong and very courageous; **be careful to do according to all the law** (don't eat from this one tree) which Moses My servant commanded you; do not turn from it to the right or to the left, so that you may have success wherever you go. [8] "This book of the law shall not depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do according to all that is written in it; for then you will make your **way** (this is the Hebrew word that is translated as mission) prosperous, and then you will have success. [9] "Have I not commanded you? Be strong and courageous! Do not tremble or be dismayed, for the LORD your God is with you wherever you go."

Things have certainly become more complicated. Now there are multiple laws, now there is a book of the written law. Remember how simple it started out? Work in this beautiful garden and obey this one commandment. But even though things are more complicated the mission has not changed, the assignment is the same. What's the assignment? Their lives would be prosperous if the **way** they lived their lives placed an emphasis on the Word of God. Just listen to God. I am going to give you a beautiful land, a new garden to work and live in, and you are to obey my commandments.

Joshua 24:14-18 (NASB)

[14] "Now, therefore, fear the LORD and serve Him in sincerity and truth; and put away the gods which your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the LORD. [15] "If it is disagreeable in your sight to serve the LORD, choose for yourselves today whom you will serve: whether the gods which your fathers served which were beyond the River, or the gods of the Amorites in whose land you are living; but as for me and my house, we will serve the LORD."

[16] The people answered and said, "Far be it from us that we should forsake the LORD to serve other gods; [17] for the LORD our God is He who brought us and our fathers up out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage, and who did these great signs in our sight and preserved us through all the **way** (this is the Hebrew word that is translated as mission) in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed. [18] "The LORD drove out from before us all the peoples, even the Amorites who lived in the land. We also will serve the LORD, for He is our God."

"The **way** in which we went and among all the peoples through whose midst we passed." God was giving them possession of the new Garden, the promised land. This new Garden is a place where they will prosper if they just do what God has always intended that they do. Just work this garden, enjoy it's fruits, and obey my commandments.

What's the assignment, what is their mission? Their **way** was to serve God in sincerity

and truth. They had a choice to make. You and I have a choice to make. God has made it simple again for He has given us the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to walk beside us to help us. However the mission is the same. Work in my garden so you will have eternal life. Work in my garden so others will be able to have eternal life.

[Acts 1:8] but you will receive **power** when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth."

Jesus' ride into Jerusalem on what we celebrate as Palm Sunday was the beginning of the next step in God's plan of salvation. Jesus would testify and teach for one last week. Then He would be tortured and murdered to pay the penalty for all the sins of all mankind. The full penalty of sin is the grave and Jesus would go to the grave, He would die. Then God the Father would lift Jesus' lifeless head off of the cold stone slab in the tomb and breathe the breath of life into His nostrils and He would come to life again. Being released from death Jesus would be freed from the grave where He would go out to appear to His disciples. In a few weeks He would be taken up to the throne of heaven sending back the Holy Spirit to help us to do one thing – accomplish the mission God has always had for mankind. One day Christ will return to raise everyone from the dead and to gather His Body the Church together to go into that fellowship for all of eternity. That will be the climax, the finale of the completion of God's mission for mankind.

I hope as you celebrate Easter week you will keep in mind that you are on a mission. You have the ability to choose whether you will live out your own mission in life or whether you will live out God's mission for your life. Keep in mind the price God paid to have relationship with you, His ultimate Mission.

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