

The World for Christ

Acts 1:8

When Jesus came to this world 2,000 years ago He had a mission to fulfill. He was born in Bethlehem so that one day He might give his life as a sacrifice for our sins on Calvary's cross. After He fulfilled His mission on earth the bible tells us that He returned to heaven. The last words Jesus said before He ascended back to Heaven were these: *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."* (Acts. 1:8)

Jesus came as a missionary from Heaven. When we turn from our sins and trust Jesus as our Lord and Savior He makes us missionaries for Heaven. When Christ was born the message of the angels to the shepherds was "come and see." Our mission is to "go and tell."

I'm going to make five statements about what I believe, and if you agree with me say "amen." It may be the first time some of you have said "amen" out loud in church.

- I believe Jesus Christ is the Son of God.
- I believe Jesus lived a sinless life, died a sacrificial death on the cross, rose victoriously from the dead, and ascended back to the Father in Heaven.
- I believe that all people have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God.
- I believe that all those who die without Jesus Christ as their Savior will spend eternity separated from God.
- I believe that Heaven and Hell are real, and only those who have a personal relationship with Jesus Christ are going to make it to heaven.

Now if you believe those five statements are true can you tell me anything more important in this world than sharing Jesus with those who don't know Him? Can you tell me a greater cause we could commit our lives to than reaching the world with the Gospel of Jesus Christ?

If we are going to fulfill our God given mission to reach the world for Christ there are four things we must do. First of all, we must function in...

1. God's Power

In Acts 1:8 Jesus said, *"But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you."* What a tremendous promise we have in this verse. As a born again believer in Jesus Christ, you have at your disposal the greatest power on planet earth; the power of the indwelling Spirit of God.

The moment you trust Christ as your Savior and Lord you are born of the Spirit. The Holy Spirit comes to live within you. He presents you with certain spiritual gifts, He produces within you spiritual fruit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self control), and He provides you with spiritual power.

Missions and evangelism are God's work. God alone can convict men of their sin. God alone can open closed minds and soften hard hearts. God alone can convince men of the truth that Jesus is the Son of God. God alone can cause the lost to trust Christ as their Savior.

Saving souls is God's work. He doesn't ask us to do His work; He invites us to join with Him in His work, and He has given us His Spirit to equip and empower us to do just that.

Beloved, if you don't hear anything else I say today please hear this: God can use you just as you are, with your own unique personality and giftedness, to bring people to faith in Jesus Christ. You do not have to be a great theologian, an eloquent preacher, or a gifted evangelist to be an effective witness for Jesus. All you have to be is a saved soul willing to share your faith in Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit.

If we going to reach the world for Christ we must function in God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit. Second, if we are going to reach the world for Christ we must fulfill...

2. God's Purpose

Jesus goes on to say in Acts 1:8, *"And you shall be witnesses to Me."* If you want to know how God intends to reach this lost world for Jesus Christ just go home and look in the mirror! Church, if we don't do it, it will not be done! God has no "Plan B." Either we will be His witnesses or there will be no witness in this world for Christ. The Lord Jesus has chosen you and me to be His witnesses.

Jesus said, *"And you shall be witnesses to Me."* Don't miss that. You are to be a witness. You're not to be a salesman; you're not to use high pressure tactics to get people to buy your product. Your mission is not to sell the Savior. You are to bear witness to the Savior.

You're not to be an attorney. Your mission is not to persuade people through the power of your argument. Listen, you're never going to argue anyone into heaven. Your mission is to present the case for Christ and allow the Spirit of God to convict and convert the sinner.

Neither are you to be a holy hit man, if you will. You don't have to strong-arm anybody into the kingdom of God. You don't have to walk up to people, get in their face and say, "Turn or burn buddy." That's real effective.

Your mission is to be a witness. Now, what does it mean to be a witness? A witness is very simply a person with a testimony. Every Christian has a testimony. The bible says *"He who believes in the Son of God has the witness in himself"* (1 Jn. 5:10). 1 Peter 2:9 tells us that we were chosen and saved by God to *"proclaim the praises of Him who called us out of darkness into His marvelous light"* (1 Pet. 2:9).

In the 5th chapter of Mark we have the wonderful account of the Lord Jesus delivering a poor man from demon possession. The man was so grateful to Jesus for setting him free that he wanted to go with him, but Jesus said *"Go home to your friends, and tell them what great things the Lord has done for you, and how He has had compassion on you."* (Mark 5:19). That dear folks is the essence of witnessing; it's simply telling others who Jesus is and what great things He has done for you.

In a courtroom the responsibility of a witness is not to prove what he is testifying to is the truth or press for a verdict. The job of a witness is to testify to what he knows, what he has seen, and what he has heard. That is what every Christian is to do. We are to be a witness for Jesus.

If we going to reach the world for Christ we must function in God's power, the power of the Holy Spirit. We must fulfill God's purpose, that we would be witnesses for Christ. Third, if we are going to reach the world for Christ we must follow...

3. God's Plan

In Acts 1:8 Jesus not only tells us what we are to do, and how we are to do it, but He also tells us where we are to go. He gives a plan to go along with the power and the purpose. Jesus said, *"And you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."*

Notice first of all, we are to be witnesses *"in Jerusalem."* Jesus was just outside of Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives when He spoke these words. He could look across the Kidron valley and see the beautiful Temple. When Jesus said, *"you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem"* he was saying to His disciples, "The first place I want you to be my witness is in your own neighborhood--where you live." And that's the first place we are to be witnesses; right here where we live.

You don't have to travel to another state or another country to be "on mission." We have a great mission field right here at home. The place where you work is a mission field. Your school is a mission field. Your neighborhood is a mission field. The truth is, your home and family is a mission field.

We are to be witnesses "in Jerusalem." But that's not where we are to stop; it's where we are to start. After Jerusalem we are to go to *"Judea and Samaria."* That means we are to go to our state and nation. Did you know that literally millions of people in the Show Me State do not know the Savior? It is estimated there are some 225 million people in the United States who are lost without Christ.

And then Jesus said we are to go *"to the end of the earth."* That means we are to take the Gospel to the entire world. Over one quarter of the world's population, some 1.7 billion people, have never even heard the Good News of Jesus Christ. That is why some of us are packing our bags and flying to El Salvador next week. We are not going down there to get away from the bitter cold and snow; we are going to El Salvador to bear witness to our Savior.

If we going to reach the world for Christ we must function in God's power, we must fulfill God's purpose, and we must follow God's plan. Finally, if we are going to reach the world for Christ we must meet find...

4. God's Passion

Turn with me to Matthew chapter 9. I want you to see the kind of passion we must have if we are going to reach the world for Christ. *"But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd"* (Matthew 9:36).

Do you know what it is that determines what you are really passionate about? It's your priorities. Our priorities in life determine what we are passionate about.

Conversely, our passions demonstrate what are priorities really are.

There are at least two things every Christian should be passionate about. First, and foremost, you ought to be passionate about God. Now, if you are passionate about God, then loving Him, worshipping Him, serving Him, and knowing Him will be the priority of your life. The Word of God describes a passion for God this way; "*Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God, the LORD is one! You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*" (Deut. 6:4-5).

The second thing that every Christian should be passionate about is missions. A passion for God is the foundation of a passion for missions and evangelism. On a personal level, our passion for missions and evangelism is the fruit of our passion for God. When you love God with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength, then you will love what He loves. God loves people. He has a passion for lost souls. "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son...*" (John 3:16). The bible says there is rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents and turns to the Savior.

If I were to ask you, "What is the number one reason most Christians don't witness," what would you say? Would you say that fear is the number one barrier to most believers? Maybe you would say that the reason many Christians don't share their faith more readily is that they simply don't feel competent. They don't feel prepared to deal with the questions non-Christians sometimes ask. Now I am sure fear is a factor and competence is a concern for a lot of us, but beloved I am convinced that the greatest barrier to witnessing for most of us isn't a lack of courage or competence, it's a lack of compassion.

The painful truth is we simply don't care enough. May God give us broken, burdened hearts and his passion for lost souls!

I wonder will there be anyone in heaven who will walk up to you and say, "Thank you for caring about me. Thank you for praying, and giving, and going. Thank you for sharing Jesus with me."