

Team Jesus and their mission

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Date: 25 February 2024

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[0 : 00] Let's pray. Father, thank you for your presence here by your Spirit. And now, Father, we want to listen to your Son.

We know today that he has much to say to us, so we pray, Father, that we will not close our ears and shut our hearts. Instead, Father, give us realisation, realisation that too often our vision for our lives are far too small and our desires are too easily satisfied.

So instead, Lord, please plant your vision into our hearts so that as your beloved children, we will carry out your will, please you, and find our joy in you.

And all this we long to do in the name of Jesus Christ. Amen. There was once a consultant who had been working with a certain organisation. On many fronts, there were lots of good things about it. The leadership was attentive to employee needs. They paid well. They had open communication. They even thoughtfully designed the work areas to maximise the employees' comfort.

[1 : 09] The delegation of work was fair and efficient. And yet, the members of this organisation were not especially motivated and productive. They didn't hate their work, but there was just no spark about them.

Why? Why? After some digging, the consultant realised the problem. These people had little sense of mission in their work.

They were busy, yes, but no one felt especially engaged in what they were doing. They worked hard, even played hard, but didn't feel connected to a larger purpose.

They didn't sense what they were doing was important. And it is easy for Team Jesus to fall into the same trap.

As Christians, we can work hard, get busy, and yet we have no spark. And sometimes that can be because we have little idea of what our purpose is.

[2 : 15] Instead, we simply default to one of two postures. We could adopt the posture of what the author Don Everts calls a safe Christian.

Now, that's when we are only interested in protecting ourselves from the world. We see the world mainly as a threat because it's so full of temptation and sin.

And so we pour all our energies into isolating ourselves from such negative influences. Or we might adopt the posture of what he calls a successful Christian, whereby we are caught up instead with impressing the world.

Our energies are now poured into seeking worldly achievements because that way we think, the world can look at us and say, wow, those Christians, oh, this one become Tan Sri.

The other one got money. Not bad, huh? But today, Jesus invites us to take a different posture towards the world.

[3 : 26] Instead of protecting ourselves from the world or trying to impress the world, he says, let's go on mission to the world.

That's our purpose because that's what Jesus himself does. Remember last week? We saw that Jesus himself was on a mission.

He had set his face to go to Jerusalem. And it was a mission to the world, to us, as he journeyed to the cross to rescue us from our sin.

And now he invites us to go on mission with him once again to the world. As the pastor James Stewart, who lived in the early 20th century, puts it, to accept Christ is to enlist under a missionary banner.

To be on team Jesus is to go on mission with him. But how should we go about this? How should we be on mission?

[4 : 41] Well, today, Luke 10 will show us three ways to go on mission for Jesus by being clear what mission we're on, by having the right expectations for mission, and by locating our joy outside of mission.

So let's begin with the first way, by being clear what mission we're on. What is our mission? After all, we might share in Jesus' mission, but what we do can't exactly be the same.

There is no way we can go to Jerusalem to atone for the sins of others. So what is our mission?

Verse 5 gives us a clue.

When you enter a house, Jesus tells us, first say, peace, to this house. So notice, our mission is all about sharing a message.

It's verbal. During Christmas, we usually sing, hark the herald angels sing. But, what is a herald?

Have you ever wondered that?

[5 : 49] In medieval Europe, heralds were army officers who were sent out to towns to announce what the king was doing.

And that's what we are. Heralds announcing what King Jesus is up to, just like the angels at the first Christmas. And, what is King Jesus up to?

Verse 5 tells us, bringing us peace. Now, this isn't a wishful peace. You know, the kind that contestants in beauty pageants talk about when the host asks them, oh, what is it that they want? And they all say, well, peace. No, this is not peace as a wish, but peace as a gift. This is the peace Luke has already told us about back in chapter 1.

because God's mercy has come to us, shining light into our darkness, and taking us away from the shadow of death, we now have peace.

[7 : 02] That's what Zechariah declared back in chapter 1. And all this is possible because Jesus is here. Or as Paul would later put it in Ephesians 2 verse 14, Jesus himself is our peace.

That's our message. When we say, peace to this house, what we are really sharing is the gospel itself. The good news that Jesus, by his life, death, and resurrection, has ended all hostility between us and God and reconciled us to him.

That's our mission. We see this again in verse 9. What is team Jesus to do when they enter a town that welcomes them?

Heal the sick who are there and tell them, the kingdom of God has come near to you. So yes, the work of healing and caring and serving and perhaps even exorcism might be present as we go about our mission.

In fact, next week we'll see how much caring for others matter. But again, the end goal is to herald God's saving work.

[8 : 29] For as we do so, that's when people can begin to experience shalom, which is what characterizes the kingdom of God.

Now, what is shalom? It's a word that we sometimes use to greet others with, isn't it? And it's actually what translates that word peace in our Bibles.

That's what the word peace in the Bible is really getting at. It is when every dimension of our existence physical, physical, social, emotional, spiritual, is working rightly because there is now peace in our relationship with God.

And the gospel alone is what can truly bring shalom. let me illustrate. Mares McConnell is an experienced church planter who goes on mission for Jesus in some of the toughest places in Scotland.

He goes to neighbourhoods where they are predominantly working class, they have lots of problems with drug abuse and so on. And he once talks about a certain Mr.

[9 : 47] X. Now, Mr. X was an alcoholic with a criminal record and a history of abusing his partner. But what happened when he heard the gospel and came to Christ?

Well, this is how McConnell puts it. Firstly, his physical shalom began to improve under the influence of the Holy Spirit as he stops poisoning his body with alcohol.

Secondly, his psychological shalom improves as he bows the knee to King Jesus and allows his mind to be shaped by him. And thirdly, social shalom kicks in as he stops abusing his neighbours, shoplifting from the local store, beating his partner and tormenting his children.

Instead of contributing to the breakdown of social shalom, he begins to become a force for good.

You see, my friends, that is the potential impact of our mission.

When we speak and proclaim this transformative message into the lives of people, when we tell them, you might feel far away from God's kingdom now, but did you realise the kingdom of God has come near to you?

[11 : 22] God can change their lives from the inside out. And if you happen not to be a Christian here today, that's what we want to tell you.

Jesus can change your life. And when we realise evangelism is actually nothing more than inviting people to experience shalom through Christ, then we will see being on mission with Jesus not as burdensome, but as an honour.

You know, sometimes, subconsciously, we can think of evangelism as the equivalent of introducing our friends to our dentist to go and have their teeth pulled out.

We think of it almost as unnecessary evil. And if so, no wonder we feel reluctant to be on mission. But what if we remember what we are doing is simply introducing people to Jesus, the most compassionate, selfless, and kind person we know?

then we will be more eager to do so. And this mission is for everyone and for everywhere.

[12 : 46] Did you notice that in verse 1? Jesus appoints 72 people and sends them two by two into every town and place.

Now, that number 72 is interesting. Why such a specific number? Well, the commentators suggest a variety of reasons, but the most convincing explanation is simply that in the Greek translation of the Old Testament, we have 72 nations listed in Genesis 10 representing the whole world.

So, in the same way Jesus chose 12 disciples to represent the new Israel, now Jesus sends 72 people, the same number of disciples as they are nations, to represent his mission.

It is basically Jesus' way of saying, I want to send as many people as there are nations because my mission is for everyone everywhere.

now of course, that doesn't mean we personally have to go to everyone, everywhere. We are not God.

[14 : 09] We are not omnipresent. But I think that means we are to have ready feet. Wherever we go, whoever we are with, wherever there is opportunity, we share Jesus.

So, if you are the only Christian in your workplace, did you know you are the most important person there? Not because you are the brightest person or you add the most value to the company, but because you are the one person who could help someone else know Jesus.

You are the one person whom God might use to bring peace, shalom, to someone else. But you need to be ready. You need to see yourself as God's messenger.

And we do what we can, wherever we go. I'm not the world's best evangelist, probably not even an average one, but I was once in a grab.

I was going to the hospital, I think, and the guy asked me what I do, so I tell him I'm a pastor, and then he shares with me his religious beliefs and talks about having to do lots of good deeds to keep on God's good side.

[15 : 41] And I sympathize, and then I say, oh, isn't it interesting, because that's not what my religion teaches. And that gets more conversation going, and I tried to share some snippets of the gospel.

Probably the one time I wish the grab ride was longer, so I could say a bit more. But wherever we go, whoever we are with, wherever there is opportunity, we share Jesus.

We don't need to wait until we invite people to some church event to speak of him. We do it as we do life with others in their spaces.

And so we go on mission for Jesus by being clear what mission we're on. But here's the second way we go on mission, by having the right expectations for mission.

And it's interesting how Jesus sets our expectations. On the one hand, we should be optimistic. Look at verse 2.

[16 : 53] Did you notice what Jesus says? The harvest is plentiful. Now, that might be hard for some of us to believe.

Perhaps you are the only Christian in your family. Perhaps you are the only Christian in your social circles. we don't feel it so much in Sarawak, but because we live in the most Christian part of the nation.

But if you live in West Malaysia, as some of us have, you would feel your minority status more. And you know, I wonder if the disciples in Jesus' time felt the same way.

Sure, there are people who believe, but compared to the vast numbers of the Roman Empire, they were just a tiny drop in the bucket. And think what the early Christians faced.

Remember, they were an illegal religion throughout this period. At best, they were tolerated. At worst, they were badly persecuted. They had no church buildings like the Grand Cathedrals that came much later.

[18 : 05] There were no cool worship bands or anything like that. And we often forget this, but the early church actually set quite a high bar for membership.

You couldn't just say, oh, I'm a Christian, and they would admit you into the church just like that. They wanted to know you were genuine. So, with all that in mind, it's hard to believe that the harvest will be plentiful within it.

And yet, the historians show us that while in AD 100, there might have been as few as 25,000 Christians, two centuries later, there might have been as many as 20 million.

And of course, we can see that kind of thing happening even in the 20th century in places like Africa and China. So, we can be optimistic.

It might be hard to believe now, but God will gather a great multitude of people. And here is the encouragement. He does it not through a band of professionals, not through people like Billy Graham, but simply by ordinary Christians like you and me telling others about Jesus.

[19 : 30] So, while it is still the day of salvation, there should be a sense of urgency. Let's get on with the harvest. And that's why verse 4, do not greet anyone on the road, because now is not the time for idle chit-chat.

Now is not the time to be distracted. And that is also why verse 7, you don't waste time going around looking for the best lodging.

Your job as Team Jesus is to be tourists looking for the best package deal. If you do so, those who receive you might wonder about your true motives.

But instead, Jesus says, simply be content with what you've been given. Concentrate instead on sharing the gospel.

4, verse 6, you never know if there are people receptive to the message. If there are, that's great, because then they will get the true peace that Jesus himself brings.

[20 : 44] But on the other hand, Jesus says, while we should be optimistic, we shouldn't be naïve. For being on mission for Jesus can be dangerous.

look at verse 3. Go, I'm sending you out like lambs among wolves. Think about that picture for a moment.

Jesus doesn't say, I'm sending you out like a bear among wolves, or even a dog amongst wolves. Bears would be more than a match for a wolf, and I'm guessing even a dog might put up some kind of fight.

But lambs, they are completely defenseless. So it's dangerous. I had a seminary mate from China, and he is almost completely deaf in one ear.

Why? Because he was boxed so much from sharing the gospel that he eventually lost his hearing. Now, here in Kuching, we might not face danger to that extent, but being on mission for Jesus sometimes means opening up ourselves to ridicule where we're not allowed to defend ourselves.

[22 : 10] Now, that can be quite confronting, can't it, to make ourselves vulnerable like that. Being on mission can be dangerous.

And it can be disheartening. Look again at verse 2. Jesus says the harvest is plentiful, yes.

But, and you know when there's a but, it's usually not good news, but the workers are few. As my old pastor Vaughn Roberts likes to point out, we usually think the problem is a lack of converts, but Jesus thinks the problem is a lack of colleagues.

As we go on mission for Jesus, sometimes it can feel a bit lonely. You wish there was a teammate with you in school or at the office, but none are inside.

Perhaps that's one reason Jesus sends the people out two by two to minimize discouragement, and offer accountability. But, there is always a need for more workers.

[23 : 27] In other industries, there can sometimes be a worry about oversupply. Kuching seems to be overflowing with pharmacies at the moment, for example. But Jesus says, there will never be an oversupply of God's workers.

We always need more. And it can be sometimes disheartening to see so little. And it can also be disheartening because Jesus says the response will always be mixed.

Again, verse 6 assumes that not everyone will want the peace on offer, doesn't it? And verse 10 tells us there will be towns who will welcome team Jesus.

So, how then should we prepare ourselves in light of what Jesus says? Well, Jesus says that here are two things you need to keep remembering.

First of all, you need to stay dependent on God. That is the emphasis of the first few verses, isn't it? What do you do when the workers are few?

[24 : 48] you keep praying. You keep asking the Lord of the harvest for more. You ask for more team Jesus members to join you on mission.

And you ask for your labour to be fruitful. You pray for your family, you pray for your friends, you pray for your workplace. If we are finding it especially hard to share Jesus at the moment, perhaps it's good to ask ourselves, have we been praying?

Sometimes, God is just waiting for us to ask. After all, it is his mission we are on. And we don't just keep praying, but trusting.

In verse 4, Jesus says, travel light, trust me for your provision. Now, this command to travel light seems to be especially for these 72 at this time, since Jesus later lifts this prohibition in Luke 22. But what Jesus wants to teach here is dependence in action. Fulfilling the mission of Team Jesus is not dependent on our resources, our cleverness, our charm, our ability to answer difficult questions, or any of those things.

[26 : 24] No matter how inadequate we feel, the Lord invites us to depend on him. So, don't worry if your lips often stutter, or if your hands are empty.

Those are the lips and hands Jesus likes to use. And then second of all, Jesus says, keep telling the gospel in its fullness.

In verses 10 to 12, Jesus pulls no punches. He says, you need to warn people about the consequences of rejecting him.

You see, the offer of salvation is real, but so is the coming judgment. If the kingdom of God is coming near, but you choose not to be part of that kingdom, that wouldn't go well with you.

And that's why Jesus mentions verses 12 to 15. In the Old Testament, fire did eventually fall down on Sodom. They had rejected God in very explicit ways.

[27 : 40] They did not welcome God's messengers at all, and so judgment fell on them. But Jesus now says it's going to be worse for Chorazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

Why? These were places who would have seen all that Jesus had done, and heard all that Jesus had taught. Bethsaida was the site of the feeding of the 5,000.

Capernaum was where Jesus raised the centurion's daughter. And so they had the even greater privilege of seeing God the Son for themselves in action.

But despite all these, they did not turn to Jesus. They did not repent. There was little sign of faith. And if you turn your back on God, you are saying, I prefer the opposite of Shalom.

I prefer the opposite of peace. peace. And that is what you will reap. So what does this mean for us today?

[28 : 55] I think it means that while we might not necessarily adopt the same language as verses 12 to 15, we do need to help people grapple with the consequences of rejecting Jesus.

That's part of the mission too. We want to make sure people understand what they are saying no to. They are not just saying no to an invitation to go to the movies.

The stakes are high. And we try our best to communicate that. But I think it also means that we don't take rejection personally.

If our message is rejected, we just move on. After all, verse 16, whoever listens to you, listens to me. Whoever rejects you, rejects me.

But whoever rejects me, rejects him who sent me. Just as someone rejecting a message from an ambassador isn't really rejecting the ambassador, but rejecting the president or the prime minister whose message the ambassador is carrying.

[30 : 09] king. So someone rejecting the gospel is really rejecting king Jesus, not you. So we just keep praying, keep trusting, and move on.

we should be clear what mission we're on. We should have the right expectations for mission. And thirdly, and perhaps surprisingly, we should locate our joy outside of our mission.

in verse 17, the narrative jumps ahead to when the 72 now return from their mission trips. And clearly, it has gone well.

They say, Lord, even the demons submit to us in your name. Can you hear the note of delight in their voice? Wow, this is power we have in Jesus.

It's incredible. Even the demons, fall down. It's a bit like that song we just sang earlier. Every demon's spirit in hell always trembles when your name is heard.

[31 : 26] But how does Jesus respond? It's quite interesting, isn't it? I think Jesus both affirms their delight, but then also seeks to deepen it.

He affirms their delight with his words in verses 18 and 19. Jesus replied, I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven.

I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy. Nothing will harm you. Now, there is some discussion what Jesus means here, but I think the gist is this.

within the context of Luke 10, Jesus is giving us a glimpse into the spiritual reality of what the disciples have just done.

As they go on mission for Jesus, proclaiming the kingdom of God, they are seeing Satan's kingdom suffer a significant blow every time they see someone turning to Christ and being set free from their bondage to sin.

[32 : 45] So, yes, the disciples are right to rejoice. Jesus has given them the privilege of participating in the eventual downfall of Satan.

And do you know that's what we still do today? though you might feel weak and hesitant as you fumble your way through telling someone else about Jesus, you are actually doing nothing less than ushering Satan towards his ultimate defeat.

For Jesus has made sure that snakes and scorpions, which represent everything evil or oppressive that Satan likes to throw at us, can never ever shake our standing.

Now, it is important to make sure we know what Jesus is not saying. This is not a promise of immunity from physical harm.

Paul is stoned, James is executed, Peter is martyred, but the point is this, no ultimate harm can befall us, because Satan no longer holds any power to send you to hell.

[34 : 07] He cannot make any valid accusation. So, rejoice! Our enemy, though active, is a defeated enemy, and that becomes a little clearer every time someone accepts the gospel we share.

need. But that is not where Jesus stops. Instead, he also wants to deepen our delight.

You see, Jesus knows us too well. He knows it's easy for success to get into our heads. He knows we all too easily get significance from the things that we do.

He knows that such success could easily lead to self-confidence and cause us to lose dependence on God. So, he also says, verse 20, however, do not rejoice that the spirits submit to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.

He says, don't locate your joy ultimately in how successful your mission is or not. Because, remember, you'll be rejected sometimes, wouldn't you?

[35 : 27] You'll find it dangerous and disheartening. You won't always have successful mission trips. So, if you find your identity there, you will be on quite an emotional rollercoaster.

Instead, Jesus says, delight in the outcome of my mission to you. That is, delight in your salvation. Delight that is secure. If God has written your name down, it can never be erased. And that is why we are blessed beyond compare, verse 24.

And that is what fills Jesus with joy, verse 21. Now, the words Jesus says in verses 21 and 22 are a little dense. But here is the gist.

Jesus now turns to his father and in the hearing of team Jesus, he gives thanks. Why? Because, he says, God the father, who alone knows God the son, has still seen it fit to help us know Jesus like he knows Jesus.

[36 : 51] We are like little one-year-olds who cannot understand adult matters, but God has kindly made sure we still get who Jesus is.

We are little children, but what really matters is that we are now God's children. And that actually frees us to be on mission, doesn't it?

Because it means whether or not we see lots of people come to Christ through us, or we see no one at all come to Christ, that is not where our joy is located.

And we are not worried even if there is danger because hey, our name is in heaven's database already. We are already God's children.

Jesus has finished his mission and we are the outcome. So, rejoice and let that free us to share what gives us joy so that others can experience that same joy as well.

[38 : 06] So today, let us consider our posture towards the world. Do we default to being the safe Christian?

Or do we default to being the successful Christian? Well, today Jesus shows us neither is the posture of team Jesus.

Instead, team Jesus people go on a mission for Jesus to the world, not being naive, for the work will be tough, but at the same time being optimistic because the harvest is plentiful and the Lord of the harvest senses.

And team Jesus people go on mission rejoicing that Jesus has already completed his mission of heading to Jerusalem, dying on the cross, and rising again for our sake.

So, let us go on mission, knowing that we are working for the downfall of Satan and the increase of people's joy.

[39 : 21] Let us pray now that here at KAC, we will all be working for team Jesus' mission. Let's pray.

Let's pray. Let's pray. Let's pray. Heavenly Father, the harvest is plentiful, but the workers are few. And so, Lord, we want to obey you this morning and ask that you would send all of us out into that harvest field, that you would send us with ready feet to tell your message, the message that can transform people's lives as it has ours, that can bring shalom, that can help people find peace with you, be in a relationship with you.

So, Father, we just pray, Lord, that you would strengthen our resolve, let that be our mission today, in the weeks to come, in the year to come. Help us to do our best to look around us, to see who we can reach out to, who we can pray for, who we can talk to.

And we pray that in all this, we remain secure, in our identity in you, confident that we are your children, that our names are written in heaven, and that we find our joy there.

[40 : 42] We pray all this in the name of Christ. Amen.