

CONNECT 101 – Five Gospel Fruits

Lesson 6 – Jesus and Mission

Questions to Consider:

1. Can you define / explain God's Vision in creating?
2. Can you define / explain God's Mission or Means in accomplishing His Vision?
3. How might we as a community of faith be more proactive in carrying out God's Mission in fulfilling His Vision.

Theme: Jesus saves His people to be who they are where they are in the carrying out of His Mission for the fulfilling of His Vision.

Introduction:

My intent in study is to understand the biblical text. The Bible is to shape our worldview and control how we live our lives. The power of Scripture is in God's design. It is not our presuppositions or experiences. God gave us the Bible in order that we might understand His *Story*. It is only as we understand the Bible that we can rightly understand our story.

Even as we have explored our previous four topics of Jesus and Church, Scripture, Prayer, Generosity, and now MISSION, we must allow the Bible to shape and inform our experiences and thinking. If we do not, we are slaves to the immediate and to the emotion.

Let us retain perspective on some basic truths so that a good thing does not go bad.

- First, apart from Jesus, nothing we do will fix what is broken in our relationship with God. Only Jesus can fix what is broken in our relationship with God and this He did at the cross.
- Second, no amount of pious activity can change our relationship with God as if our relationship with God exists because of what we do and not on what Jesus did.
- Third, the Christian life is not focused on what we do for God, but rather what God does for us. Moreover, nothing we do merits favor from God. All we have from Him is because of Jesus.
- In addition, no sin on my part can merit God's disfavor. Jesus took all of my sin and God's resultant wrath for it at Calvary.
- Fourth, if the activity is in any way horizontal, then it relates to our relationship with "one another." It is what we do as community. The design of our activity is for community.
- Fifth, the "ought" of any activity is for our joy. Nothing we do or not do makes us any more or less Christian. However, any activity is for our joy by increasing our understanding of God's unconditional love for us.

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Luke's intent (Luke 1:1-4) is for his audience to know with certainty the truth of what they have come to believe. Did Luke succeed?

I am convinced that God does work powerfully through His word and enables us to live lives of purpose in our "regular" moments. Our present study concerning mission has the power to reshape our thinking and refocus our energy as we **be who we are where we are**.

The Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts form a single unit. **Luke's intent is to show how God's design to bring joy to the nations is in Jesus.** We will not take the time to trace all of this. However, we will consider the overarching idea and then focus on how we individually and corporately are part of this grand narrative.

Before I begin and without going into too great of detail, let us be reminded that God's Vision for His creation is to be a place where He would meet with His people for their joy and His glory. Our Mission is the means of securing His Vision in the world. Our Mission is by His design. What began in the Garden in Eden is to continue to this day. We are to extend the boundaries of God's Garden until the ends touch and secondly, we are to populate the Garden with more people. Through evangelism and church planting, God's Vision for His creation is taking place. What we currently see in our world is the victory of God. God is winning.

What the Gospel of Luke and the Book of Acts does is trace for us the victory of God through the Mission of God fulfilling the Vision of God. Let us begin our study.

I. The Gospel of Luke – Volume I

It is clear from the beginning of Luke's record that the gospel is for all nations, both the Jew and the Gentile. Consider the following thoughts.

When the angel Gabriel brought the revelation to the shepherds, his word of joy was inclusive and for all the people.

- ⁸In the same region there were some shepherds staying out in the fields and keeping watch over their flock by night. ⁹And an angel of the Lord suddenly stood before them, and the glory of the Lord shone around them; and they were terribly frightened. ¹⁰But the angel said to them, "**Do not be afraid; for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be for all the people;** ¹¹for today in the city of David there has been born for you a Savior, who is Christ the Lord." (Luke 2:8-11)

When Simeon beheld the Christ child, he uttered words of far reaching consequences.

- ³⁰For my eyes have seen Your salvation, ³¹Which **You have prepared in the presence of all peoples,** ³²**A LIGHT OF REVELATION TO THE GENTILES,** And the glory of Your people Israel. (Luke 2:30-32)

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- ¹⁴ And Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about Him spread through all the surrounding district. ¹⁵ And He began teaching in their synagogues and was praised by all. ¹⁶ And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and as was His custom, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. ¹⁷ And the book of the prophet Isaiah was handed to Him. And He opened the book and found the place where it was written, ¹⁸ “THE SPIRIT OF THE LORD IS UPON ME, BECAUSE HE ANOINTED ME TO PREACH THE GOSPEL TO THE POOR. HE HAS SENT ME TO PROCLAIM RELEASE TO THE CAPTIVES, AND RECOVERY OF SIGHT TO THE BLIND, TO SET FREE THOSE WHO ARE OPPRESSED, ¹⁹ TO PROCLAIM THE FAVORABLE YEAR OF THE LORD.” ²⁰ And He closed the book, gave it back to the attendant and sat down; and the eyes of all in the synagogue were fixed on Him. ²¹ And He began to say to them, “Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your hearing.” ²² And all were speaking well of Him, and wondering at the gracious words which were falling from His lips; and they were saying, “Is this not Joseph's son?” ²³ And He said to them, “No doubt you will quote this proverb to Me, ‘Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we heard was done at Capernaum, do here in your hometown as well.’” ²⁴ And He said, “Truly I say to you, no prophet is welcome in his hometown. ²⁵ But I say to you in truth, there were many widows in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the sky was shut up for three years and six months, when a great famine came over all the land; ²⁶ and **yet Elijah was sent to none of them, but only to Zarephath, in the land of Sidon**, to a woman who was a widow. ²⁷ **And there were many lepers in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, but only Naaman the Syrian.**” ²⁸ And all the people in the synagogue were filled with rage as they heard these things; ²⁹ and they got up and drove Him out of the city, and led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city had been built, in order to throw Him down the cliff. ³⁰ But passing through their midst, He went His way. (Luke 4:14-30)

Jesus healed Gentiles.

- ¹ When He had completed all His discourse in the hearing of the people, He went to Capernaum. ² **And a centurion's slave, who was highly regarded by him, was sick and about to die.** ³ **When he heard about Jesus, he sent some Jewish elders asking Him to come and save the life of his slave.** ⁴ When they came to Jesus, they earnestly implored Him, saying, “He is worthy for You to grant this to him; ⁵ for he loves our nation and it was he who built us our synagogue.” ⁶ Now Jesus started on His way with them; and when He was not far from the house, the centurion sent friends, saying to Him, “Lord, do not trouble Yourself further, for I am not worthy for You to come under my roof; ⁷ for this reason I did not even consider myself worthy to come to You, but just say the word, and my servant will be healed. ⁸ For I also am a man placed under authority, with soldiers under me; and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he goes, and to another, ‘Come!’ and he comes, and to my slave, ‘Do this!’ and he does it.” ⁹ Now when Jesus heard this, He marveled at him, and turned and said to the crowd that was following Him, “**I say to you, not even in Israel have I found such great faith.**” ¹⁰ When those who had been sent returned to the house, they found the slave in good health. (Luke 7:1-10)

The parables Jesus taught were inclusive.

- ²² And the slave said, “Master, what you commanded has been done, and still there is room.” ²³ And the master said to the slave, “**Go out into the highways and along the hedges, and compel them to come in, so that my house may be filled.**” (Luke 14:22, 23)

At His ascension, He gave words to speak of what would unfold and the nations are included.

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- ⁴⁴ Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.” ⁴⁵ Then He opened their minds to understand the Scriptures, ⁴⁶ and He said to them, “Thus it is written, that the Christ would suffer and rise again from the dead the third day, ⁴⁷ and **that repentance for forgiveness of sins would be proclaimed in His name to all the nations, beginning from Jerusalem.** ⁴⁸ **You are witnesses of these things.** ⁴⁹ And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.” (Luke 24:44-49)

There can be little question that in Luke’s account we are left with the thought that the Gospel is to be “proclaimed in His name to all the nations.” Luke shows how this will happen. In addition, He shows the certainty of it happening in his second volume, the Book of Acts.

II. The Book of Acts – Volume II

Consider how the book opens.

- 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.**” (Acts 1:6-8)

The Church gathered in Jerusalem (2:1-8:3)

- ¹ When **the day of Pentecost had come**, they were all together in one place. . . ⁵ **Now there were Jews living in Jerusalem**, devout men from every nation under heaven. (Acts 2:1, 5)

The Church scattered into Palestine and Syria (8:4-12:25)

- ¹ Saul was in hearty agreement with putting him to death. And on that day a great persecution began against the church in Jerusalem, and **they were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the apostles.** . . . ⁴ Therefore, those who had been scattered went about preaching the word. ⁵ **Philip went down to the city of Samaria** and began proclaiming Christ to them. (Acts 8:1, 4, 5)

The Church advancing to the end of the earth (13-28)

- ¹ **Now there were at Antioch**, in the church that was there, prophets and teachers: Barnabas, and Simeon who was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen who had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. ² While they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, “Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.” ³ Then, when they had fasted and prayed and laid their hands on them, **they sent them away.** ⁴ So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, **they went down to Seleucia and from there they sailed to Cyprus.** (Acts 13:1-4)
- ³⁰ And **he stayed two full years in his own rented quarters** and was welcoming all who came to him, ³¹

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preaching the kingdom of God and teaching concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered. (Acts 28:30, 31)

The intent of the narrative in Acts is to show the triumph of God’s purpose in every “uttermost becoming a Jerusalem.” Throughout the Book of Acts, Gentile inclusion is established.

- But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, **to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:** (Acts 9:15)
- And they of the circumcision which believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, **because that on the Gentiles also was poured out the gift of the Holy Ghost.** (Acts 10:45)
- ¹And the apostles and brethren that were in Judaea heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God. . . . ¹⁸When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, **Then hath God also to the Gentiles granted repentance unto life.** (Acts 11:1, 18)
- ⁴⁶Then Paul and Barnabas waxed bold, and said, It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you: but seeing ye put it from you, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, lo, **we turn to the Gentiles.** ⁴⁷For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, **I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation unto the ends of the earth.** ⁴⁸And **when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad, and glorified the word of the Lord: and as many as were ordained to eternal life believed.** (Acts 13:46-48)
- And when they were come, and had gathered the church together, they rehearsed all that God had done with them, and **how he had opened the door of faith unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 14:27)
- And being brought on their way by the church, they passed through Phenice and Samaria, **declaring the conversion of the Gentiles:** and they caused great joy unto all the brethren. (Acts 15:3)
- ⁷And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, **that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.** . . . ¹²Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, **declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.** . . . ¹⁴**Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.** . . . ¹⁷That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and **all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.** (Acts 15:7, 12, 14, 17)
- And when they opposed themselves, and blasphemed, he shook his raiment, and said unto them, Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean: **from henceforth I will go unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 18:6)
- And when he had saluted them, **he declared particularly what things God had wrought among the Gentiles by his ministry.** (Acts 21:19)
- And he said unto me, Depart: **for I will send thee far hence unto the Gentiles.** (Acts 22:21)

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- **But shewed first unto them of Damascus, and at Jerusalem, and throughout all the coasts of Judaea, and then to the Gentiles**, that they should repent and turn to God, and do works meet for repentance. (Acts 26:20)
- That Christ should suffer, and that he should be the first that should rise from the dead, and **should shew light unto the people, and to the Gentiles**. (Acts 26:23)
- **Be it known therefore unto you, that the salvation of God is sent unto the Gentiles, and that they will hear it**. (Acts 28:28)

The Gospel is inclusive. Ethnicity does not define the gospel, only need. Throughout Luke's Gospel, Jesus invites the blind, the deaf, the mute, the leper, and the poor. Such maladies know no boundaries. Thus, Luke's account is to show how the gospel is global and Acts reveals how the gospel has gone global. Yet, **how did the gospel go from point A to point B?** What means has God employed to carry out His Mission in fulfilling His Vision? Has He used extraordinary means to accomplish His purpose, or are the means more humble? How are we to get the gospel out? Let us now trace the power of the gospel.

With this in mind, let us examine Luke's account and see what we find concerning Jesus and Mission.

III. God's Mission uses ordinary means to spread an extraordinary message.

We will begin by noting the various occupations found in Luke's Gospel. What is of interest are the occupation of those Jesus saves.

- Zacharias, a priest (Luke 1:5)
- Shepherds (Luke 2:8)
- Anna, a prophetess (Luke 2:36)
- Tax collectors (Luke 3:12 [Levi, Luke 5:27; Zaccheus, Luke 19:2]; 7:29)
- Soldiers (Luke 3:14 [Centurion, Luke 7:2]; 7:8)
- Physicians (Luke 4:23; 5:31)
- Simon, John, and James, fishermen (Luke 5:2, 10)
- Scribes (Luke 5:21 [Lawyers, Luke 7:30])
- Pupil/Teacher (Luke 6:40)
- Prostitution (Luke 7:37)
- Moneylenders (Luke 7:41)
- Herod's Steward (Luke 8:3)
- A Sower (Luke 8:5)

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- A Pig Farmer (Luke 8:26-39)
- An Official of the Synagogue (Luke 8:41, 49)
- Martha, a Homeowner (Luke 10:38, 39)
- Rulers and Authorities (Luke 12:11)
- Judges (Luke 12:57-59; 18:2)
- Vineyard (Luke 13:6)
- An Estate owner (Luke 15:12; Nobleman, Luke 19:12)
- A Rich Man w/ Managers (Luke 16:1 [cf. Luke 16:19; 18:23])

Not all who accepted Jesus as the Messiah left their employment to follow Him. Some needed to and they did, but only a handful of people did this (Matt. 5:11, 27). Even in those two situations, we do not know if their departure from their vocation was permanent.

What is the big idea? Jesus expected those whom He saved to **be who they were where they were.**

What I believe we will see are humble means. God has always used the ordinary to do the extraordinary. However, the extraordinary is the gospel, not the size of the ministry or campus or plant or reach. We have made missions and ministry big business. The extraordinary is what God does. If you look around, you will see huge missions, ministries, and churches. I do not doubt that of all it falls inside of His will because He is the God of providence and sovereignty. Nevertheless, I am also convinced that something seems mismatched. Something is wrong when we spend the bulk of energy and resources on maintaining the machinery and not the message. I fully recognize the need to steward what we have and to understand and live in the cultural context we find ourselves, but let us not think “slick” and “program” can replace the simple, but immeasurable power of the gospel.

Stepping out in faith might be getting up and going to work realizing you are doing kingdom work. Stepping out in faith might be staying in your marriage realizing you are doing kingdom work. Stepping out in faith might be using your desire and skill set in a local church when other more attractive platforms are calling. Yet, stepping out in faith might be doing something completely unpredictable in following Jesus. I cannot tell you what God would have you to do in various situations, but I also know you are in God’s will and **His will is for you to be who you are where you are.**

Unfortunately, we have made the will of God and the call of God so mysterious and complicated that we sit polarized and anxious over something that is powerful and natural. What is God’s will, what is God calling you to do? **God’s will and call is for you to be who you are where you are.**

Jesus did send the twelve in Luke 9:1ff and the seventy in Luke 10:1ff, but the pattern is for those

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who know Jesus to live Jesus in the context they find themselves.¹ This occurred when John the Baptist addressed his audience in their vocation. He did not tell them to leave their vocation, but to live with kingdom value (Luke 3:10-14).

One of the questions confronting us is, “Does God want me to change vocations or quit my job, enter vocational ministry and/or go to a foreign culture and/or change geographical location?” My response is “maybe,” but what I do know is clear. **You are to be who you are where you are right now.**

There is no higher or lower vocation in the mind of God. **All vocations are sacred and missional.** Friend, we have done a disservice by elevating the work of the gospel to the professional and failing to see how **we are the means God has chosen to fulfill His vision in carrying out His mission.**

The Church does have those who change vocations and look to the local, gathered church as their employer. We see this in 2 and 3 John and we see this in the Gospel of Luke with the sending of the twelve and the seventy. Yet, where they were in relationship to the cross is what shaped their “vocation.” However, the Apostle Paul, Priscilla and Aquila were all bi-vocational.

We use the Apostle Paul as our example. He and his co-laborers, Priscilla and Aquila, made tents while pursuing their primary goal of spreading the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Acts 18:1-5). However, this is not the only instance of Paul’s using Tentmaking. The New Testament specifically reports that Paul worked in Galatia, Corinth, Thessalonica, and Ephesus (1 Th. 2:9; 2 Th. 3:7-8; Acts 20:31-35; 1 Cor. 4:12; 9:6). He used his skill of making tents to carry him into some very difficult mission fields and into areas, such as Corinth, dominated by commerce. For Paul making tents was not just about paying expenses. In Corinth, Paul would preach to the Jews on the Sabbath in the synagogue, and during the week, he worked as a Tentmaker talking to the merchants and travelers. His business or trade was not as much about expenses or negotiating visa requirements in “Restricted Access Countries” as much as it was about opportunity. His trade gave him regular day-to-day contact with merchants and travelers. **This contact furnished him the opportunity to minister, and it furnished him legitimacy because he was providing a needed skill in the community.** Does anyone really believe that Paul worked during the day at his trade and never shared the Gospel with any of those that came to him for his services? On the contrary, his whole motivation was about opportunity. Our belief is that to the Corinthians, Paul was a Tentmaker. This identity provided greater opportunity than he would have had if he was seen simply as a missionary or pastor. Therefore, his trade, in Corinth, was a tool that provided greater opportunity to share the saving grace of Jesus Christ both during the week and even on the Sabbath in the synagogue. Today Tentmaking has taken on a much broader definition than just referring to the skill of

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making tents. **A Tentmaker is a Christian man or woman who views work in light of the Great Commission and as an opportunity to serve the Kingdom of God.** Therefore, work is a vital aspect of Christian witness because it provides substantial means of developing relationships, credibility, and contexts for ministry.²

They saw who they were in light of who He is and sought to be who they are where they were.

Is leaving everything to follow Jesus normative? There are two competing ideas as it relates to leaving everything to follow Jesus. **First**, leaving everything is not missional; it is redemptive. The appeal to leave everything is the decision to trust Jesus only, rather than continuing to trust yourself and your own abilities. Everyone saved or will be saved does this. When you accept Jesus as your Savior from sin and death for your joy and His glory, you leave everything to follow Him. Everything you once clung to, you now give up. **Second**, those passages that speak of individuals leaving everything to follow Jesus in mission do so in the context of the looming cross. What they did is not normative for us now. Such thinking seems so counter to what we have heard for over 100 years in mission speech, but there is no sustainable text warranting such action on our part.

Many Christian authors write in a similar light. Christians who are “sold out” for Christ are elevated as examples for the “average” Christian to emulate. They encourage the reader to make their lives worth something by doing this or that. Although commonly held, is it biblical? This does not mean you cannot follow their suggestions if you so desire, but it is not coming out of the exegete of any biblical text. Every one of these approaches tell you “to try harder to do better.” Every one of these approaches makes you feel like you are not doing enough or that what you are doing or how you are living is not following Jesus. Every one of these approaches leaves you feeling guilty.

Yet in our study of Luke, is this where we find ourselves? Let us consider several of these passages.

- When they had brought their boats to land, **they left everything** and followed Him. (Luke 5:11)

When Peter, James, and John left their work, did they ever return to it? Who was supporting them financially? What about their families? Were these individuals in a place of financial independence? Chances are, they all returned to work. Their leaving of everything spoke of their commitment to Jesus.

- ²⁷ After that He went out and noticed a tax collector named Levi sitting in the tax booth, and He said to him, “Follow Me.” ²⁸ And **he left everything behind**, and got up and began to follow Him. ²⁹ And Levi gave a big reception for Him in his house; and there was a great crowd of tax collectors and other people who were reclining at the table with them. (Luke 5:27-29)

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Levi, like Zacchaeus, was an individual of means. They probably acquired their wealth through unethical exploitation. Unlike Peter, James, and John they might have been financially independent people. Yet for them to leave their employment would have potentially put their families at risk. Again, their leaving, their actions speak of their relationship to Jesus. They had left “home, wife, etc. for the kingdom.”

How do we explain this behavior of **leaving everything** to follow Jesus?

The language speaks of commitment. Jesus employs this contrast throughout His invitation. In Caesarea Philippi, His disciples identify Him as “The Christ of God” (Luke 9:20). In that setting, He begins to reveal to them that He is going to suffer, die, and rise from the dead in three days (9:22). Their salvation will come through His death. He then says, “Not only must I die in order for you to live, but if you will live, you must also die” (Luke 9:23-26). What this life from death looks like is denial, cross bearing, and following (v. 23). All three statements are synonyms. He explains what this means in verses 24-26.

The contrast between where they are and where He is, is noted by personal preservation (v. 24), physical wealth (v. 25), and social popularity/standing (v. 26). Like the initial three statements found in verse 23, these “things” are all synonymous. The invitation positions these “things” against following Him. We find salvation in following Him. We cannot follow Him without giving up our confidence in these “things.” We have to stop believing our salvation from sin and death and our standing before the Father is in our ability to save ourselves. We must let go of these “things” and follow Him. To follow Him is to believe He is the One.

This is the first point made earlier: “Leaving everything is not missional; it is redemptive. The appeal to leave everything is the decision to trust Jesus only, rather than continuing to trust yourself and your own abilities. Everyone who has ever been saved or will be saved does this.”

Our second point: “Those passages that speak of individuals leaving everything to follow Jesus in mission do so in the context of the looming cross.” What they did is not normative for us now.

As Jesus sets Himself toward Jerusalem in Luke 9:51, we encounter an interplay between Himself and three disciples.

- ⁵⁹ And He said to another, “Follow Me.” But he said, “Lord, permit me first to go and bury my father.” ⁶⁰ But He said to him, “Allow the dead to bury their own dead; but as for you, go and proclaim everywhere the kingdom of God.” ⁶¹ Another also said, “I will follow You, Lord; but first permit me to say good-bye to those at home.” ⁶² But Jesus said to him, “No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.” (Luke 9:59-62)

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Two elements shape our understanding of this passage. **First**, partial commitment will not work. The urgency of the hour demands full commitment. **Second**, the cross event is now pressing in. There is no room for anything but complete focus on this one thing. The sense of urgency changes in Luke 22:35-38. As noted earlier, these two elements are not the same. The first element defines how we “get saved.” The second element colors where they were in the journey toward Jerusalem. The first element will not change. The second element does.

Notice Luke 14:25-33.

- ²⁵ Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, ²⁶ “If anyone comes to Me, and **does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple.** ²⁷ Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple. ²⁸ For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost to see if he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, ³⁰ saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ ³¹ Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and consider whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? ³² Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ **So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.** ³⁴ Therefore, salt is good; but if even salt has become tasteless, with what will it be seasoned? ³⁵ It is useless either for the soil or for the manure pile; it is thrown out. He who has ears to hear, let him hear.” (Luke 14:25-35)

Is Jesus telling us that in order to follow Him we must **literally** hate our closest family members, literally take up a cross, and **literally** give up all of our possessions? Do we see this throughout Luke’s gospel?

All three statements are in parallel. Each one speaks to the same idea. In order to be saved, every other option must be abandoned. One cannot be saved because of lineage/blood lines. One cannot be saved because of personal ability. Finally, one cannot be saved because of personal possessions. Nothing but Jesus can save one from sin and death. To follow Him is to abandon all other options. It cannot be Jesus plus anything. Jesus is the only mediator between God and man.

The appeal to sell everything has two circumstances. First, if one is looking to their possessions to save them, Jesus says, “sell all and follow me” (Luke 18:22). This is what was said to the rich young ruler.

- When Jesus heard this, He said to him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me.” (Luke 18:22)

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The second circumstance causing the appeal is the proximity to the cross. We have already noted this in the sending of the twelve (Luke 9:1ff) and the seventy (Luke 10:1ff) and His appeal for His followers not to worry about food or clothing in Luke 12:22-34.

- Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves money belts which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near nor moth destroys. (Luke 12:33)

The thought of literally giving up everything in our current place in history is overridden by Luke 22:35, 36.

- ³⁵ And He said to them, “When I sent you out without money belt and bag and sandals, you did not lack anything, did you?” They said, “No, nothing.” ³⁶ And He said to them, “But now, whoever has a money belt is to take it along, likewise also a bag, and whoever has no sword is to sell his coat and buy one.” (Luke 22:35, 36)

Where does this leave us? What does Jesus expect from you? **He expects you to be who you are where you are.** Does Jesus want you as a Christian to sell your business, give it all to the poor, and go into another geographical location with a different ethnicity and culture in order to plant a church? Perhaps, but not from anything we have seen in Luke’s Gospel. What we attempt to do is justify our actions or seek biblical direction by some passage of Scripture when the text cannot support such thinking. The Bible is not an Ouija board or a Magic 8 Ball that gives us direction and answers to our various decisions. Our gathering on Sunday is not a séance where we find God’s will.

The Bible is a revelation of Jesus. The Bible tells us what Jesus is doing in and through His church. Let me strive for clarity. **We come to hear God’s will and His call and what God’s will and call is for your life is to be who you are where you are. God’s will and call is doing the hard stuff of getting up every day and living out His Story in your story.** God’s will and call is for you to be who you are where you are.

The advancement of the Mission did not move forward by the skills of a few professionals, but in the coming and going of the common person.

Think with me on this matter. If every Christian business individual who transferred to China for work began living out the gospel, the mission force would increase exponentially. We can replicate this pattern in every area of the globe.³ Missions must become indigenous. **Missions happens when ordinary people simply be who they are where they are.** There are strategies we might employ as a church to carry out the mission more effectively, but let us not default to our creative means. **The gospel has gone global through the means of ordinary people simply living out the extraordinary gospel.**

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The apologist Tertullian lived at the end of the 2nd century AD. In his work *Apologeticus*, Tertullian defends Christianity, demanding legal toleration and that Christians be treated as all other sects of the Roman Empire. It is in this treatise that one finds the phrase: "the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church" (*Apologeticus*, Chapter 50).⁴

ISIS is slaughtering Christians in Iraq and Syria.

- Christians are the most persecuted religious group worldwide. An average of at least 180 Christians around the world are killed each month for their faith. (Source: Open Doors USA)
- Christians in more than 60 countries face persecution from their governments or surrounding neighbors simply because of their belief in Christ. (Source: U.S. Department of State)
- One of the worst countries in the world for the persecution of Christians is North Korea. With the exception of four official state-controlled churches in Pyongyang, Christians in North Korea face the risk of detention in the prison camps, severe torture and, in some cases, execution for practicing their religious beliefs. North Koreans suspected of having contact with South Korean or other foreign missionaries in China, and those caught in possession of a Bible, have been known to be executed. (Source: Christian Solidarity Worldwide)
- In 41 of the 50 worst nations for persecution, Christians are being persecuted by Islamic extremists. (Source: Open Doors)⁵
- When we pray for those in prison for their faith, we remember that the gospel came to us in letters written from jail. When we plead for those whose churches are burned in Egypt, we remember that our hope isn't in building religious empires but in a New Jerusalem we've never seen. **When we weep for those crucified in Syria, we remember that our Lord isn't a guru or a life coach, but a crucified Christ.**
- As we worship this week in freedom and prosperity, let us remember in prayer our brothers and sisters in the Lord, around the world, who are suffering for Jesus' name.⁶

Yet the gospel wins. **There are stories of ordinary people being who they are where they are that we will never hear of**, yet God is working in them and through them to those around them. ISIS will not win. ISIS has already lost. ISIS is simply the serpent's seed raging against the seed of the woman and that battle has already been settled.

Friend, you and I are the ordinary through whom God does the extraordinary work of the gospel in the saving of sinners. He is fulfilling His Vision through you and me.

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Many of us have heard the names of such people like William Carey, Adoniram Judson, David Livingstone, George Muller, Hudson Taylor, Jonathan Goforth, Amy Carmichael, Nate Saint, Jim Elliot, and Eric Liddell. Yet how many of us are familiar with our own church history?

In 1950, John and Esther Fiddler and their family found their way to Waukesha from Chicago where they were members at Moody Church. Earlier, John had been involved in church planting in Argentina, so he took the initiative. In December of 1950, several men met in his home to discuss the need for a Bible-oriented church here in town. That evening a decision was made to form a new fellowship to be called Waukesha Bible Church. At the second annual meeting in November 1952 with membership at 37, a special offering completed payment on the lots. In February 1953, a “Kick Off” dinner was held in the Avalon Hotel and bond subscriptions of \$15,000 were received and groundbreaking was authorized.

How many of us know of Fred Alden, Marion Brooks, Chuck Cronin, Harold and Ruth Elder, or John and Bev Hillmer or the forty-one others who were members of this church in 1954? It does not matter who knows you. Chances are when you die you will soon be forgotten, yet the gospel wins and one day you will stand before God and He will show you what He did in you and through you to those around you to the glory of God the Father.

Shepherding the Sheep (What is the Next Step?)

Each of you by your presence, by your giving, and by your serving are part of something extraordinary. The Gospel of Luke does not ask us to be extraordinary. The extraordinary is the work God does in saving sinners. **The gospel invites us to be who we are where we are and in so doing, the gospel has encircled the globe.** Let us stop thinking we are losing or the devil is winning and start realizing God is winning and His victory is our victory.

Let us go to church and gather with other Christians for our joy.

Let us learn the Scripture for our joy.

Let us pray for our joy.

Let us give for our joy and

Let us live in and out His *Story* in front of the unbelieving for their joy and ours.

What is the ordinary in your life where the extraordinary is taking place? See it, live it, and celebrate it. **Be who you are where you are by seeing your story inside of His.**

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¹ When we read Luke 9:1ff, 9:57-62, 10:1ff, and 12:33 and the like, we must place them in the context of Passion Week. Such extraordinary means of selling everything and following Jesus is set in the context of His imminent death. If I had time, and I do not, we would see that the gospel invitation demands this of all and it is what we did when we came to Jesus. However, what they did in following Him in Mission is different from what we do in following Him in Mission.

² <http://www.worldwidetentmakers.com/education/what-is-a-tentmaker>

³ For further study in this area see, *The Missional Entrepreneur: Principles and Practices for Business as Mission*, Mark Russell. *Great Commission Companies: The Emerging Role of Business in Missions*, Steven Rundle, Tom A. Steffen. *Tentmaking: The Life and Work of Business as Missions*, Patrick Lai.

⁴ <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apologeticus>

⁵ <http://erlc.com/issues/quick-facts/persecution/>

⁶ <http://erlc.com/persecution>

