

MAN WITH A MISSION

So far, here's what we've said in our first three lectures.

1. The goal of our lives is to become like our Master Teacher Jesus.
That's how we will become the men we were meant to be.
2. The purpose of our lives is to glorify the Father.
Because that was the purpose that drove Jesus.
3. The most important battles of our lives will be spiritual in nature.
The world is a spiritual battleground.
And we are expected to fight the inner battles that will make us more like Jesus
and the outer battles that will bring the kingdom of God into the lives of
others.

Main point for today.

Jesus lived the impactful, one-of-a-kind life that he did because
Jesus was dedicated to his mission.

Jesus' purpose,
we saw week 2, was to glorify the Father.
But within that purpose,
he had a particular mission that he was to fulfill.

There are all kinds of ways to glorify God.
And no one can do them all.
Not even Jesus.

We are all limited.
The hours in our day,
the number of years in our lives,
the energy in our bodies,
what we're good at.
We are all limited.

Jesus, when he became human,

accepted many of the same limitations we live with.

Philippians 2.6-7: Though he was God, he did not think of equality with God as something to cling to. Instead, **he gave up his divine privileges**; he took the humble position of a slave and was born as a human being.

Still God when he came to earth,
Jesus gave up the privileges and powers of being divine.

He lived in a human body,
with many of the same limitations we experience.
So how did he live such an incredible, world-changing life?

He was a man with a mission.

That's our main point for today.
We'll spend the rest of our time fleshing that out.

But that's the main point that I want us to grab onto
and apply to our lives.

Jesus was a man with a mission,
and if we are going to be like him,
we, too, must be mission driven with our lives.

First,

1. JESUS KNEW WHAT HIS MISSION WAS.

Matthew 9.35: Jesus went through all the towns and villages, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the kingdom and healing every disease and sickness.

A mission, at least the way I'm talking about it this evening/morning,
is our calling.

It's the primary contribution we are to make to **the work** of God's kingdom.

It's that most important thing – or few things –
we are to accomplish with our lives
to advance what God is doing in the world.

It may be more than one thing,
but it can't be everything;

it can't even be many things.

And because we are limited,
it's important that we know what our mission is
so we can focus our strengths and talents
to accomplish it.

What about Jesus?
What was his mission?
What was essential that he do with his life?

There were many things he could have done
for the kingdom.
He could have built homes for the homeless.
He didn't.
He could have run a soup kitchen.
He didn't.
He didn't drill wells for people who were without clean water.
He didn't hold seminars on how to have a better marriage
or how to get out of debt and thrive financially.

All good things.
All things some people are called to make their mission for the kingdom.

But none of those really good things
were the mission of Jesus.
His calling, his mission was
to preach and teach about the kingdom,
to demonstrate the power and the love of the kingdom
by healing the sick and delivering the demonized, and
to die on the cross to make it possible for us to enter the kingdom,
forgiven and reconciled to God.

In the Matthew passage we just read,
Matthew gives us an overview of the ministry of Jesus.

If you want to know what a typical week looked like for Jesus,
Matthew says, here it is:
"Jesus went from town to town, teaching, preaching and healing."
And, of course, with every day

he marched closer and closer to the cross.

Jesus knew what he was here for.
He knew what his mission was
and that's what he did with his life.

This is important for us, as well.
You and I can be good guys
who do some good things,
even lots of good things with our lives.
But our impact will be much greater
if we have it clear in our heads and hearts
"this is what I'm called to do with my life."
This is where I need to invest my energies.

I'm a big believer that real change is hard.
People and systems don't like change.
Try to change them,
even for their own good, and
they'll push back.

On top of that,
try to make kingdom changes, and
our enemy,
the one Jesus called the Evil One,
will fight every change that makes the world more
the way that God wants it to be.

So real change rarely just happens.
It almost always requires that
great effort be expended over a long period of time.
And that does not happen when we do a little good here
and move on to do a little good somewhere else.
It happens when we have a mission
that we are committed to for a substantial period of time.
So, Jesus lived the most impactful life the world has ever seen
and one reason why is he was clear about what his mission was.

To be like your Master Teacher,
you must know what your mission is.

Do you?

Can you finish these statements?

“Here’s what I believe is most important for me to accomplish
for God’s kingdom with my life.

Here’s the primary contribution I believe I am to make
to God’s plan to change the world.”

If you can’t,
that’s ok.

Sometimes we find our mission
and sometimes it finds us.

But we need to be on a path to finding it.

Ask yourself some questions.

What issue do I care most about?

Poverty, race relations, abortion, education for disadvantaged children?

What people group do I care most about?

Children, youth, the elderly, foster kids, people who have never heard the
Gospel, people with handicapping conditions, inmates, Christians who are
being persecuted or who live in the developing world with few resources to
do God’s work?

What am I good at that could help other people?

Carpentry, auto mechanics, personal finances, sports, the arts, etc.

When have people told me I made a difference in their lives?

When I have taught, when I have counseled, when I have listened, when I have
prayed for others?

What would I do for God if I could not fail?

When do I hear myself think, “Someone should do something about that?”

All of these are clues to what God’s mission for your life might be.

Knowing what your mission is
brings great power into a life.

It enables us to focus our energies on what’s most important.

It keeps us from becoming distracted by other things.
And it forces us to persevere when we become discouraged.

2. JESUS' MISSION WAS CENTRAL TO HIS EXISTENCE.

Jesus knew his mission and
when it came to fulfilling his mission,
Jesus was all in.
There was nothing more important to him.

His thoughts,
his plans,
his schedule,
his life –
they all focused on accomplishing the mission God had for him to fulfill.

John 4.34: My food,” said Jesus, “is to do the will of him who sent me and to finish his work.”

It nourishes me to do the Father's will
and fulfill his mission for my life.
I stop doing it,
I die.
That's how important it is to me.

John 5.17: My Father is always at his work to this very day, and I too am working.

This isn't a part-time gig.
It's not what I do
when it's convenient or when I can work it in.

This is why I'm here.
This is what I do
because this is who I am.

Go back to the idea that we are all limited.
Our time, our energy, our abilities.

You cannot do it all.
But you are to fulfill your mission.

And for that to happen,
you must commit yourself to it.
“This is why I am here.
And this is what I will do.”

Some of you are cursed with competence.
You can do many things well.
And you are responsible.
If you agree to do something,
you do it.
You make it a priority
and you give it your best.

And when people learn these things about you,
they are going to ask you to do many things.
Many good things.

And because you're a good person,
you're likely to say “yes.”
But if you do that,
if you allow yourself to get pulled into all kinds of directions,
your mission will suffer.

You'll be so busy doing so many good things
that you won't fully accomplish those few, truly essential things
that God put you on this earth to do.

But when you know what your mission is
and when it becomes central to your existence,
it will give you the ability to say no to other things,
even good things that will distract you,
and focus on what's most important.

Your mission will be different than the mission that drove Jesus.

Some of us are called to preach and teach,
but not many.
Some of us are called to have healing ministries,

but not many.
None of us are called to die for the sins of the world.

Your mission will be different than the mission of Jesus.
But you have a mission.

Your mission is likely to be different than mine.
It's likely to be different than the guys around your table.

But you have a mission.
You must know what it is
and you must commit yourself to it.
It should be at the center of your life,
central to our existence,
because the mission of Jesus was central to his existence.

3. THE MISSION OF JESUS WAS ABOUT SAVING THE LOST

People get lost in life.
They get lost from hope and love.
They get lost from themselves.
And they get lost from God.

And the mission of Jesus was about finding and saving the lost.
Look what he said about himself in Luke's Gospel.

Luke 19.10: For the Son of Man came to seek and save those who are lost.

I once had a parishioner say to me,
"We Methodists,
we don't believe in all that salvation stuff, right?
That's what the Baptists believe."

Well, first of all and most important,
Jesus believed in all that salvation stuff.
In fact, he said that's why he came:
to save the lost.

And since you asked,

John Wesley, the founder of the Methodist movement told his preachers

John Wesley: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord.

Salvation is more than getting people into heaven.
That's part of it,
a big part of it.
But it's about helping people become whole and well spiritually
and living the life they were created to live.
And that was the mission of Jesus
and in some way that should be our mission.

Back to Jesus, Luke 19.
He defines his mission as seeking and saving the lost.

People who get lost physically –
they're often a mess.
They've been in the woods for days,
sleeping on the ground,
exposed to the elements.
Or they've been in the desert
with nothing to eat or drink.
Or they've been wandering city streets,
disoriented and afraid.
When they're found, often
they're hungry and thirsty;
they're dirty and smelly;
they can be frightened and irrational.
And sometimes they'll even strike out at anyone who tries to help them.

And it's the same thing with people who are spiritually lost.
People who have been wandering around lost from God,
without a spiritual home –
spiritually lost people can be a real mess, too.
They can be depressed and anxious.
Distrustful of kindness.
Angry and belligerent when you try to help them.

Some are too arrogant to ask for help
 or even admit that they're lost.
 And the wrong turns they've taken –
 they'll blame others that they went that way,
 make excuses for what they've done,
 even take pride in the mistakes they've made.

Don't idealize the lost.
 Most people who are spiritually lost
 are not saying a little prayer that God will send some nice man
 to find them so they can embrace him with open arms and words of gratitude.

When one of our sons was battling drug addiction,
 a counselor told us,
 "Addicts lie.
 Don't take it personally.
 That's who they are and
 that's what they do."

Loving an addict
 and helping an addict
 can be difficult and draining work.
 It can be painful and costly,
 even if you love him or her
 and do everything right.
 It's often the same way with people who are lost spiritually.

They may rebuff your efforts to reach them
 and reject the answers you have for them.
 They may even strike out at you
 if you bring up spirituality or mention Jesus.
 They may attack your faith and your motives for wanting to help them.

And it's very important that you don't take it personally.
 Because if you do,
 you'll get mad or hurt or frustrated,
 and you'll give up.
 You won't do the difficult and draining work that is often required
 to love and help a lost person come home to the Father who loves them.

So, it's important how you look at lost people.

See them as proud or arrogant,
 see them as angry and belligerent,
 see them as hard-hearted sinners,
 and you're not likely to be used by God to lead them out of darkness
 into the light.

How did Jesus see people?

Did he see them as sinners?

This is an interesting question.

Jesus does refer to people as sinners
 and he had no trouble telling people that they needed to repent of their sins.

But is that how he saw people – as sinners?

Hmm,
 this needs a little nuance.

89 chapters in the four Gospels.

3700 verses.

64,000 words.

How many times does Jesus call someone a sinner?

Well, you'll find the word on his lips about a dozen times.

3 times it's the very same statement quoted in three different Gospels.

“I have come to call not the righteous, but sinners.”

3 times it's Jesus telling folks who are proud of their lives
 that quote “even sinners” do the same good things you do –
 show kindness to those who are good to them,
 lend to those who pay them back,
 etc.

A couple of times he talks about there's rejoicing in heaven
 whenever a sinner repents.

The rest are pretty similar.

Not a knock on sinners

as much as saying how important they are to him.

Of course, he believed that we sin.

He believed it enough to go to the cross to save us from our sins.

But the times that Jesus points at someone

and calls him or her a sinner?

Your hard pressed to find any.

What were his favorite terms for people who were living contrary to God's will?

Sheep without a shepherd.

Those who labor and are heavy laden.

The blind.

Those who are sick and in need of a doctor.

Captives.

The impoverished.

The lost.

This is important.

How you see people will determine how you treat people.

How you define people will determine how you respond

when they reject you or lash out at you or make moral mistakes.

At another church,

a husband called me up.

His wife had been become addicted to pain medication.

She'd been struggling with her addiction

and depression for years.

She's talking about suicide.

I go over

and we try to reason with her,

tell her that we want to help her

and keep her safe.

We tell her that we're going to take her to an inpatient facility

where they can help her.

She curses us and wants to run out of the house.

She screams at us and tries to hit us.

How do we respond?

Well, how do you think?

With patience and tenderness

and with words that were kind and reassuring.

And we got her to some place safe.

Why?

Because of how we saw her.

A hurting, frightened, addicted woman

who's scared to death of going to a facility she's never been to,
and who's probably full of self-loathing.

She's lost.

And she needs help.

Some woman I don't know comes up to me in the parking lot,

curse me and takes a swing at me,

I probably have a different reaction.

Why?

Because I see her differently.

I see her as a crazy person.

As a threat.

Or as a past girlfriend who's still not over me.

No, I don't have any past girlfriends.

Peggy's the only girlfriend I ever had.

Next week, I'm going to talk with you about the fact

that Jesus really loved and liked people.

This week I simply want you to get this.

Our mission is to help lost people find their way home to God.

And that's not always easy.

In fact, it's often demanding and emotionally draining.

But Jesus saw the need behind the sin.

He saw the hurt and the fear and the rejection

that caused the ugliness and the anger and the pride.

Sheep without a shepherd
The sick who need a physician.
Those who are blind and lost.

You don't judge those people,
You help those people.
You care for them.

John 3.17: For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but to save the world through him.

Tony Campolo,
some of you know that name.
He's an American Baptist pastor,
sociologist,
social commentator.

I heard him once talk about a class he was teaching.
And he asked his students to imagine
what Jesus might say to a prostitute.

Many of the students gave their answers.
He saw one student with a thoughtful look on his face.

"Ted, what are you thinking?" he asked.
"I don't think Jesus ever met a prostitute."

"Of course he did," Campolo responded.
And he began to run down some passages to prove that he had.

When he stopped the young man said,
"But Dr. Campolo, do you think when Jesus met these women,
he saw a prostitute?"

You probably have someone in your life who is lost
 and who is difficult to love.
 Either they keep making the same mistake
 and won't own it.
 Or they're proud and pretend to have it all together.

Both can be really tough to love.
 But Jesus loves that person.
 Jesus died for that person.
 He came to seek and to save that person.

And if you're going to be used by Jesus in that person's life,
 then see him or her the way Jesus does.

Lost.
 Soul sick in need of a physician.
 Someone who is laboring so hard to hide from the truth
 and heavy-laden with feelings about themselves that make life difficult.

That will help you care for that person.
 And keep trying to reach him or her.

Most people change and find their way back to God
 because someone loves them
 not because someone tells them how bad they are.
 That someone is supposed to be us.
 The mission of Jesus was to save the lost.
 In some way, that's our mission, too.
 And it's very important how you choose to see them.

4. THE MISSION OF JESUS WAS ABOUT SERVING OTHERS.

Here's part of the passage we looked at a couple of weeks ago
 when James and John asked Jesus for positions of power in his kingdom.

Matthew 20.25-28: You know that the rulers in this world lord it over their people, and

officials flaunt their authority over those under them. But among you it will be different. Whoever wants to be great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first among you must become your slave. **For even the Son of Man came not to be served but to serve others and to give his life as a ransom for many.**

Why did I come?

Jesus said, "To serve.

To give my life for others.

My purpose is to glorify God.

And my mission is to serve those he loves."

If our goal is to become like Jesus,
we need to take this seriously.
We are called to be men with a mission.
And our mission is to serve others.

~~The self-centered life may bring happiness for awhile,
—but it never creates great men.
Selfishness and "me first"
never do God's work in the world,
never change the lives of others in ways that are good, and
never make us more like Jesus.~~

~~Our self-centeredness creates out of our lives a playground
—full of toys and amusements surrounded by a large fence
—that keeps others out and our stuff safe.
But like an episode of The Twilight Zone
—with each passing year the playground grows smaller
—until finally our world is reduced to the size of a prison cell
—and not only can no one else enter in,
—but we can no longer get out.
And as the lights dim,
—we hear the voice of Rod Serling: "Imagine a man trapped in a world of his
—own making."
But the point is not that the self-focused life won't make us happy.
The point is that the self-focused life won't transform make us like Jesus.~~

~~We've said before that the heart of the human problem is the problem of the
 —human heart.
 And at the heart of the human heart
 —we find pride and self-centeredness.
 And God has a remedy for that.
 It's serving.
 Serving him and serving others.~~

Dick Manning is a member of our church.

Two and a half years ago,
 Dick was diagnosed with stage 4 colon cancer.
 He's in a small group
 and some of the guys in that group said,
 "We want to go to lunch with Dick and you.
 You really need to hear his story."
 That was a little more than a year ago,
 and I am so grateful for that lunch.
 After they left,
 Dick and I spoke at length about his condition
 and what God was doing in his life.
 We turned it into a video I want to share with you now.

Clip: Dick Manning

If you'd make your life about helping others
 if you had a short time to live,
 doesn't that tell you
 that we should make our lives about serving others now?

That video was shot a little over a year ago.
 And Dick was going well at the time.

At the first of this year,
 he received news that the treatment was no longer working
 and the end is coming.

Just months away.
Dick attends Quest.
He's here this morning.

I spoke with him on the phone last week,
and he talked about
how he was at peace,
how he was constantly being challenged to grow in his faith, and
how grateful he was that God was using him to help others.

Last Saturday he joined some of our guys,
went to one of the prisons units where they minister,
and shared his testimony
to give them hope and remind them that there is a God who loves them.

What's the message of Dick's life?
The same as the message of Jesus.

When your life is over,
you'll want to look back and know that God used you;
you'll want to know that you made his mission for your life
central to your existence; and
you'll want to know that you served other people in the name of Jesus.

That's the man you were meant to be.
That's the life you were created to live.

Don't wait for cancer,
for some other tragic event,
for death to come looming or
even for retirement.

You are a man with a mission,
right now.
And if you want to be like your Master Teacher,
your mission must be about serving others.