

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

Mark 1:16-39

Key Verse: 1:38

“Jesus replied, ‘Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.’”

Jesus began his ministry by proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The good news of the kingdom of God is not just an idea. It is the power of God that pierces the darkness to bring about God’s reign through the Messiah, the Son of God. In today’s passage we see how the kingdom of God advanced: through calling kingdom workers, preaching the word of God, driving out demons, and healing the sick. This is what Jesus focused on early in his ministry with a clear sense of purpose. As the Son of God, Jesus could have done many good things. But he did what God wanted him to do to advance the kingdom in this world. Jesus did not work according to people’s demands, but God’s calling. Jesus knew why God sent him into the world and stayed focused on it. In the book, “The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham,”¹ one chapter is titled, “Lasering In on the Mission.” It illustrates the power of having a clear purpose and focused effort by contrasting stadium lights with a laser beam. Stadium lights disperse their energy as widely as needed to illuminate a field. However, when that energy is concentrated into a single laser beam, it is limited in area, but powerful enough to cut through steel or even diamonds. When Jesus worked with a laser focus, he accomplished tremendous work in just three and a half years. Ordinary people live 80 or 90 years. It seems that we have plenty of time to accomplish something. But in reality, without focusing on God’s purpose, it is impossible to fulfill it. If we fail to fulfill God’s purpose for us, we will end our lives with regret. This is the cause of great anxiety to young people and a mid-life crisis to older people. So we should come to know God’s clear life purpose for us and devote ourselves to it as a matter of life and death, like Jesus did. Let’s learn how Jesus focused on God’s purpose to advance the kingdom of God.

First, Jesus called kingdom workers (16-20). God began his salvation work by calling one man Abraham. In the same way, Jesus began his messianic

¹ Myra, Harold & Shelley, Marshall: *The Leadership Secrets of Billy Graham*, 2005. Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan.

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

ministry by calling a few people in order to raise them as kingdom workers. Right after proclaiming the kingdom of God, Jesus was walking beside the Sea of Galilee (16a). It was not just for exercise, but to call his first disciples. The Sea of Galilee is a beautiful freshwater lake, measuring 8 miles by thirteen miles. It was thriving with fish and many local people depended on the fishing industry for their livelihood. Jesus saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the lake, for they were fishermen (16b). Jesus was looking for kingdom workers. Jesus saw that though they worked hard, it was just for their own survival. Their lives lacked the meaning God intended. Jesus said, **“Follow me, and I will make you become fishers of men”** (17 ESV). It was a gracious invitation to enter Jesus’ school where they would learn from Jesus and come to know him and become like him. This invitation gave them meaning and real life direction. It was a turning point in their lives from struggling to survive to serving the Lord, from emptiness to a full life with meaning. Jesus’ words contain both a command and a promise. Jesus requires that we obey him, committing to him as Lord. Jesus promises that as we follow him, he will make us fishers of men. When Jesus calls us, he has his own plan for us. As God told Abraham, **“I will make you a blessing,”** so Jesus says, **“I will make you become fishers of men.”** Jesus wants us to know that he has a plan for us and he will accomplish it as we follow him.

What does “fishers of men” mean? It means to catch people who are drowning in the sea of sin and death and to bring them to God. In other words, it means to be shepherds of God’s flock. People need shepherds who can take care of them like parents care for their children. Once, when Jesus saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them because they were like sheep without a shepherd (6:34). Jesus’ disciples should learn to become compassionate shepherds from Jesus. This would not happen overnight, but through sharing life together with Jesus day by day. Jesus’ invitation to become fishers of men is a great blessing and privilege.

What was their response? At once, Peter and Andrew left their nets and followed Jesus (18). Then, when Jesus called James and John, they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men and followed him. They simply trusted Jesus and followed him. It was a decision of faith. But in fact they were surrendering to God’s irresistible grace and committed their lives to Jesus. It seemed that they sacrificed everything to follow Jesus. Yet through

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

this decision they became pillars of the Christian church, who changed the course of history.

Second, Jesus demonstrated his authority to teach God’s word and drive out demons (21-28). Jesus and his new disciples went to Capernaum. This was the center of Jesus’ Galilean ministry. When the Sabbath came, Jesus went into the synagogue and began to teach (21). People were amazed at his teaching, because he taught them as one who had authority, not as the teachers of the law (22). Teachers of the law mostly taught rules and regulations from the Torah, and the traditions of elders (7:7-9,13). For example, they taught the Sabbath law in great detail, making 1,261 specific regulations (2:24). Their complicated teaching bound and burdened people. They were fixed and inflexible, like old wineskins (2:22). They were not at all concerned about the well-being of suffering people (3:2). In contrast, Jesus’ teaching had authority, for he taught the word of God which came from God directly. The words of God restored people’s relationship with God through forgiveness of sins and planted hope in the kingdom of God. When we see Jesus’ life, we find that he taught the word of God persistently from the beginning to the end. Why did he spend so much time doing this? It seems like a waste. But Jesus considered it most important and urgent. Human beings suffer most, not from a lack of material things or a terrible environment, but from a lack of God’s word (Am 8:11-13). Due to lack of God’s word, people don’t know why they exist, or the meaning of their suffering and pain, or their real hope and final destination. The words of God give life to the weary (Jn 6:63). The words of God give us the knowledge of salvation through the forgiveness of sins (Lk 1:77). The words of God give us hope and vision and liberate us from all kinds of darkness: fear, anxiety, sorrow, and so on.

When Jesus taught the words of God, a man in the synagogue who was possessed by an impure spirit was exposed. He cried out, “What do you want with us, Jesus of Nazareth? Have you come to destroy us? I know who you are—the Holy One of God” (24). This was not a confession of faith. It was demonic resistance to Jesus. The demon knew who Jesus was and was terrified; he knew that Jesus had power to destroy him. Here we should acknowledge that demons are real and they are the enemies of mankind. But we cannot say that demons are behind every trouble and difficulty. Some people blame computer demons, party demons, sports demons, television

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

demons and so on to avoid their own responsibility for doing wrong. We need to discern the spiritual reality. In some cases, like in today’s passage, people really are possessed by evil spirits. This man could not be cured by psychotherapy, drugs or counseling. He needed help from Jesus who has authority to drive out demons. Jesus said sternly, “Be quiet! Come out of him!” (25) Jesus made a distinction between the demon and the man. Jesus saw that if the demon was driven out of the man he would be normal and healthy. Jesus did not rebuke the man for disturbing his message. Jesus did rebuke the demon sternly. Without a further word, the impure spirit shook the man violently and came out of him with a shriek (26). People were all so amazed that they asked each other, “What is this? A new teaching—and with authority! He even gives orders to evil spirits and they obey him” (27). News about Jesus spread quickly over the whole region of Galilee (28). People were happy to hear about Jesus, who has authority to drive out the demons which made life miserable.

Third, Jesus healed many sick people (29-34). As soon as they left the synagogue, they went with James and John to the home of Simon and Andrew (29). It seems that they went there to eat a meal together after the worship service in the synagogue. Though Jesus had become very famous, he visited his disciples’ home in order to have a more personal relationship with them. But there was a problem. Simon’s mother-in-law was in bed with a fever. So, they could not expect lunch. Some have speculated that Simon’s mother-in-law was sick with anxiety, for Simon seemed to leave everything to follow Jesus, including her daughter. But we don’t really know. They immediately told Jesus about her (30). So Jesus went to her, took her hand and helped her up. Jesus healed her in a very intimate and tender way, being mindful of this one person who needed help. In fact, Jesus’ love healed her. The fever left her and she began to wait on them (31). Simon’s mother-in-law was so thankful for Jesus’ love and healing, and she served a delicious lunch with joy and kindness.

People work hard during the day, and after sunset they need to go home and rest. Jesus had worked hard all day long. As the sun set that evening, it marked the end of the Sabbath day. From here and there, people began to appear before Jesus, bringing all the sick and demon-possessed (32). Mark says, “**The whole town gathered at the door**” (33). Jesus could have said, “I need some rest. Please come back tomorrow.” But Jesus healed all those who

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

came to him with various diseases. Jesus did not just wave his hand over the whole crowd and pronounce, “You are healed.” But as Luke’s account reveals, he placed his hand on each one, and healed them individually, one by one (Lk 4:40).

These days, so many people suffer from various diseases such as influenza, diabetes, hepatitis, arthritis, malaria, psoriasis, cancer, seasonal allergies, skin, eye, and foot diseases, and so on. According to the World Health Organization there are 12,420 categories of diseases. There are also mental and emotional illnesses, such as anxiety disorders, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, post-traumatic stress syndrome, depression, Parkinson’s disease, autism, epilepsy, obsessive-compulsive disorder, anorexia, and many others. There are also spiritual diseases, such as “tax collector’s selfishness,” “unthankful heart,” “blaming others,” “making excuses,” “victim’s mentality,” “princess mentality,” “only son syndrome,” “honor student sickness,” “youngest son’s disease,” and so on. These are all related to our sin and the work of evil spirits. There is no one who is healthy in every aspect, not even one. How can we be healed from all these diseases? First of all, we need to recognize that we are sick. Then we should come to Jesus. Jesus may heal us directly, or through doctors and medicines. In Jesus’ time people were very poor and had no proper health care. But these days, in America, we have many good doctors, hospitals and medicines. We should acknowledge that all of these resources have been given to us by God for our healing. We should not ignore physical, mental and emotional care as though everything has a spiritual solution. We need a holistic view of diseases and healing. Most of all, we need to know Jesus, who is our healer. Jesus took up all our infirmities and diseases in his body so that we may be healed and be healthy (Mt 8:17). Let’s come to Jesus.

Fourth, Jesus set the right direction through prayer (35-39). Jesus worked hard late into the night to teach the word of God, drive out demons, and heal many sick people. So he could have slept late the next day. But verse 35 says, **“Very early in the morning, while it was still dark, Jesus got up, left the house and went off to a solitary place, where he prayed.”** Jesus gave a priority to personal prayer time with God. Through prayer, Jesus renewed his strength in both body and spirit. Through prayer, Jesus received wisdom. Through prayer, Jesus overcame all kinds of temptation. Through prayer,

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

Jesus listened to God’s voice to hear what God wanted him to do. Through prayer, Jesus set the right direction for his life and ministry.

Simon and his companions went to look for Jesus (36). When they found him, they exclaimed, “**Everyone is looking for you!**” (37) When Jesus became popular, they were very happy, thinking that they also became celebrities. They dreamed of having a big and successful ministry. What was Jesus’ reply? Let’s read verse 38. “**Let us go somewhere else—to the nearby villages—so I can preach there also. That is why I have come.**” So Jesus traveled throughout Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out demons (39). Here we can learn two things from Jesus.

In the first place, Jesus had a vision to advance his kingdom. Many people are overwhelmed when they experience success. They want to enjoy it and then become bound by it, and proud. So, success can be a stumbling block. The historian Arnold Toynbee, in his book “A Study of History,” found a pattern in human history that has been repeated in numerous cultural settings. When a people face a strong challenge, a minority rises up with a creative solution and overcomes the challenge. However, that initial success leads to pride and stagnation, and eventually demise. Toynbee cited as one example the Pharisees. They arose in response to the challenge of Hellenism in Israel. By holding to the Scriptures, they thwarted the invasion of pagan culture and became shepherds for their people who could lead them in the right way. However, after their success, they became proud and self-righteous and established a fixed system that became a hindrance in Jesus’ time. We should be very careful when we experience success. We need a bigger vision to advance the kingdom of God. This is why we need to pray even more in times of success. Many people pray wholeheartedly during times of failure. But Jesus prayed in the time of success. So Jesus could maintain God’s vision to advance his kingdom. Instead of settling down to enjoy success in Capernaum, he decided to go somewhere else, to the nearby villages. “Nearby villages” refer to those places where people have not heard the gospel. In Jesus’ time, nearby villages may have included those within a day’s walk. But in our time, we can go anywhere in the world within one day. There are so many nearby villages; they cry out to hear the gospel. In order to preach the gospel, we should go there. Paul asked, “**How can they hear without someone preaching to them? And how can anyone preach unless they are sent?**” (Ro 10:14b-15a) When we go and preach the gospel, God

“THAT IS WHY I HAVE COME”

does life-giving work. That is the reason Jesus commanded his disciples to go into all the world and preach the good news to all creation (Mk 16:15). Let's have a vision to advance the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel to nearby villages.

In the second place, Jesus lived according to God's purpose for him. We have many things to do. Sometimes we do what we want to do. Other times we do what other people press us to do, or what the situation seems to demand us to do. But in the end all that matters is that we do what God wants us to do. When God sent each of us to the world, it was with a very clear purpose. We need to find this purpose as soon as possible. In order to find this purpose, we should find God first. How can we find God? Jeremiah 29:13 says, **“You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart.”** When we find God, we can discover his calling and purpose for us. Once we find it, it is wise to commit our hearts to it and embrace it as our life goal and purpose. Although the practical expression may change over time, a wise person will commit to God and his will absolutely. I found Jesus' purpose for me to be a pastor for young people and a shepherd for my nation while I was a student. Since then, I have lived according to this purpose by God's grace. I believe that I am the most blessed person among all of my classmates. Following Jesus is the best way of life. So I boldly encourage students to find God's purpose during college and commit to it. It is the way of abundant blessing. When we do, we can say, **“That is why I have come.”** At this moment, let's examine our hearts to see if we have God's clear life purpose. Let's pray to have God's vision to advance the kingdom of God by preaching the gospel.