

The Good News message and the Good News mission
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Tiffany finally made her way into the baptistry. Over the last year she had come to receive the “Good News” of Christ and was finally ready to publicly declare it. The entire Church rejoiced as if their own sins were being washed away. When she came up from the water, she felt like a mission had been accomplished.

The ideas of “good news” and mission are often spoken of in Church ministry contexts, but what do these terms mean? What is the similarity and differences between good news and mission? *Why is the mission of the Church (global and local) critical to the message of the good news of God in Jesus Christ?”*

Is it possible to preach the Good News and not remain faithful to mission? Is it likewise possible to remain faithful to mission without ever communicating the good news? Does it even matter? And if so, why?

There are statistics that suggest a lack of both the evangelizing of the good news and the mission of servanthood in the Church. These stats suggest that both criteria matter.

The need for the Good News matters. 23% of the world’s population live within **unreached people groups** who have no access to the Good News. That is 1,864,818,000 people who the Church has not reached with the good message, nor has even engaged their nations, cities, or tribe. Until we find a way to impact their community these numbers will only grow. (Project J)

The need for mission matters. 700 (36,400 a year) Children die each day from Illnesses Caused by Dirty Water and Unhygienic Living Conditions. (World Hunger Facts) Global hunger numbers rose by 46 million in 2021 bringing the total to 828 million who are in need of someone to take seriously a call to mission. (UN Report)

There are many more statistics that point out the many lives that are depending on the Church of Jesus Christ to fulfill its obligation in these areas of message and mission. Lives hang in the balance and we would do well to understand the terms.

What is the Good News? The announcement of Good News took place when an Angel spoke to Zechariah about the birth of John the Baptist, who would prepare the way the Lord. “I am Gabriel. I stand in the presence of God, and I have been sent to speak to you and to tell you this good news.” (Luke 1:19) This Greek word, euangelizō, is the word often translated as good news, gospel, and evangelize throughout the New Testament.

After John the Baptist baptizes Jesus, the Lord declared the word of Isaiah, saying, “The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor.” (Luke 4:18) Jesus and His disciples proclaimed the good news, and Jesus even commands His disciples to preach the good news to all creation. (Mark 16:15) The Apostle Paul preached the good news and held the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus Christ as first/primary importance. (1 Corinthians 5:1,3-4)

Paul’s words about the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection are formative among the church. Today, when one asks, “what is the gospel, the good news of Christ?” you can expect to hear about the death, burial, and resurrection as an answer. **To put it simply, the good news is that saving message that God so loved the world that He gave His only son. (John 3:16)**

Our Tiffany found this message of the gospel of Jesus, and it moved her to know that God loved her enough to send His own Son. She believed the message, repented, and is now recently baptized. She is a disciple of Jesus Christ, ready to carry the good news to others. This is where she is now, but her first interaction with the good news was through the mission of the Church.

What is the mission? Before Tiffany was interested in the death, burial, and resurrection of Jesus, she was trying to keep her lights on in her house and catch up with her rent. Before we could talk to her about an eternal hope, we need to give her hope for today. When she called our Church, she was in tears, having called many other churches looking for help. The help she was needing could be described as mission.

Mission can represent a special assignment given to a person or group. Jesus reveals to us His special mission in Luke when He stands up and declares the prophetic words of Isaiah.

“The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free, to proclaim the year of the Lord’s favor.” (Luke 4:18-19)

Jesus uses the very important term “good news,” but some may be surprised that He does not mention the death, burial, and resurrection. He does not mention Heaven, repentance from sin, and baptism. Instead, we see Jesus mention the physical, emotional, and spiritual needs of people. Perhaps we need to rethink the good news beyond the salvation message of Calvary?

Jesus has a good news mission that is for the entire person! The physical and emotional needs of humanity matter to God as well as the spiritual needs and throughout the ministry of Christ we see this demonstrated as the sick are healed, the hungry fed, outcast invited in, as well as sinners forgiven.

The Good News and the Mission. Perhaps Jesus views the mission and the good news as one and the same? Maybe this lack of understanding keeps the church from having a proper balance of caring for the entire person - body, soul, spirit.

Jesus proclaims the good news. Jesus embodies the good news. Jesus is the death, burial, and resurrection news that the world needs to hear. And yet, Jesus extends the good news to the lengths of the entire Kingdom of God. Several times in Scripture it describes Jesus as “proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God.” (Luke 8:1) This is an extension beyond a message of spiritual salvation, and into every area of the human experience. It is good news that God’s Kingdom covers every part of the Human experience and need.

This is seriously good news for Tiffany. She called a Church that was interested not only in her spiritual health, but also her emotional and physical well-being. Her physical needs were met when she had her electric bill paid and was not evicted from her house. Her emotional needs were addressed when she was accepted, invited into relationship, and formed friendships with people who cared.

Before she received the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection, she was introduced to the good news of the Kingdom of God. **The mission of the Church is to bring the good news of the Kingdom and the King of that Kingdom, Jesus, to those who have not yet received.**

This is mission as Gary Nelson describes it in his book, *Borderlands Church*. ‘It is in the church that we see a glimpse of the enormous potential of the upside-down kingdom of God, where the first shall be last, the least shall be greatest, and where those without hope begin to dream dreams again. Here, the person far from God finds forgiveness, the outsider finds a place to belong, and where those who in the eyes of the world are nothing find possibilities in the affirmation of God.’

Here Gary Nelson mentions aspects of the salvation message of the Church. “The person far from God finds forgiveness..” is the result of hearing and believing the good news of the death, burial, and resurrection. Gary does not stop there however and extends his view of the Church mission into the good news of the Kingdom that Jesus proclaimed, and this is where “the last are first, the least greatest, and those without hope begin to dream dreams again.”

The message of the gospel is essential, but the Church is not just the place to hear a sermon about death, burial, and resurrection, but the place to glimpse a new way of life. It is essential that the Church SHOULD also be that upside down kingdom that is counterculture to a world of loneliness, depression, hatred, and division. If we never go beyond a sermon, then we are not the Body of Christ, because Christ went beyond standing in the Synagogue and quoting Scripture. Jesus went from quoting the words of

Isaiah to going and doing these words. The Spirit was upon Him as He went to the poor, the imprisoned, and the blind and proclaimed the new rule of the Kingdom of God.

That same Spirit is available for us. We are called into that same mission of extending the Kingdom of our God to others. We are called to deliver the sermon, but to also deliver something more than words.

Something More. Pastor and Author Tim Keller said “I think that the word “missional” is useful because it means something more (though not less) than being very evangelistic. It means recognizing the post-Christian character of our western society, and revamping everything we do in accord with that.” (Keller Interview) Keller believes strongly in evangelism, but also believes mission is something more! He describes that “something more” by pointing us to the action of a good news mission.

Keller continues, “I’m good with saying that the mission of the church is basically to “make disciples.” I like it because it safeguards the centrality of what the church alone can really do—bring people to faith in Christ. But I might differ with others on what those disciples look like. If they are truly disciples, they must be motivated and equipped to love their neighbors, to do justice and mercy. And they also must be equipped to integrate their faith with their work, namely, to engage culture.”

This is the same attitude we see in Jesus and His New Testament followers. The 1st Church fed widows and cared for orphans as well as made disciples as they testified of the death, burial, and resurrection. They cared about both local and global missions. They witnessed in Jerusalem, extended to Judea, and even the uttermost parts of the Earth. (Acts 1:8) This is the pattern for the Church today. Will we begin in our neighborhood? Will we extend to those that are far off? (Acts 2:39) Do we truly believe that the power mentioned in Acts 1:8 is available for our local and global mission?

Engage the Culture. Jesus tells us to “Go into all the world and preach the good news.” So, of course we build church buildings and go into them to preach. Wait, what!? As Tim Keller referenced, the good news mission is supposed to engage culture with good works. We are to contextualize the gospel (both message and mission) to the needs, questions, concerns in our neighborhood and through-out the world.

“What am I supposed to do pastor? My boyfriend left me. I have a 5-month year old baby. I am freaking out,” Tiffany said. “It sounds like you could use some friends,” I said. I invited her over to our house where we were having a small group meeting. That night that she made some great friends who would walk with her through her uncertainty. These friends were the answer to her prayers. Their friendship was a Kingdom work of “good news.”

When she came no one spoke to her about the death, burial, and resurrection, although we prayed to one day be able to share that news. When she sat at our dinning room table, we did not tell her about

our denominational doctrinal tenants. No words like repentance, baptism, lord's supper, or church membership were discussed. Instead, we spoke like friends interested in each other's day. We engaged in life and hope. We brought in an outsider and made her an insider.

When Tiffany left that night she said, "Thanks. I really needed this." I said to myself, "Mission accomplished!"

No Boundaries. According to Scripture, the Kingdom of God will fill the entire Earth when Jesus returns. As people of the Kingdom, we should not operate by the boundaries of the secular environment. The message and mission is not bound by racial, sexual, political, or national boundaries. We have brothers and sisters who are made in the image of God within Russia as well as Ukraine, and inside Israel as well as the Gaza strip. These areas may be at war, but our mission has no such boundary. We wrestle not against flesh and blood!

The doors of our church should not be a border that keep the "saints" in and the "sinners" out. Our cities and nation should not serve as borders for our mission. We are called to go into all the world. Our God calling is both local and global. We are called to serve single moms like Tiffany in our community, and also responsible to reach the single mom on the other side of the globe. Wherever there is a boundary we won't cross, this is an area we are not ready to serve Jesus as Lord. We must proclaim Him Lord of All by taking the message to all.

In Conclusion... A quote often attributed to St. Francis of Assisi is "Preach the Gospel at all times. Use words if necessary." While there is some question of the legitimacy of the quote, St Francis did say the following words in his instruction. "All Friars... should preach by their deeds." (Stanton - Rule of 1221 Chapter XII) This saying of St Francis is not to diminish the power of spoken words, but to underline the necessity of the good news mission extending past word and into action. There must be an integrity of practicing what we preach in word and in deed.

The Church of Jesus Christ is meant to be that upside down Kingdom Gary Nelson referenced. We must have the good news message of the King who died, was buried, and rose again. We must also have the good news mission of His Kingdom and we must extend that Kingdom reach past all boundaries. If the message and the mission are not both present in the Church, then we have failed to walk in our calling. If the message and mission are both present, we will have remained faithful to the pattern of Christ, and anything is possible.

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