

Every Saint Sent

Objectives (Part 3)

Introduction

The Text

¹And he called the twelve together and gave them power and authority over all demons and to cure diseases, ²and he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal. ³And he said to them, “Take nothing for your journey, no staff, nor bag, nor bread, nor money; and do not have two tunics. ⁴And whatever house you enter, stay there, and from there depart. ⁵And wherever they do not receive you, when you leave that town shake off the dust from your feet as a testimony against them.” ⁶And they departed and went through the villages, preaching the gospel and healing everywhere. (Luke 9:1–6)

Sharing and Showing the Story

- A. In our text, we’ve seen that Jesus is sending His apostles (and now His church) out as missionaries in the world. And, for the last couple of weeks, we’ve been trying to answer the question: Sent to do what? What exactly is our mission? What are the Objectives?
1. The answer is provided clearly for us there in v. 2: “And he sent them out to proclaim the kingdom of God and to heal.”
 - a. We’ve spent two weeks on “to proclaim”. This morning we set our sights on “to heal”.
- B. Let me begin by stating as plainly as I can what I think the fundamental meaning of this text is: The proclamation of the kingdom of God ought never to be without an accompanying manifestation of it.
1. Jesus puts the word and deed of His missionaries together into one package. There is to be both declaration concerning the kingdom and demonstration of it. There is to be both an explanation of the gospel and an evidencing of its saving and restorative power. We not only teach of God’s grace we touch broken sinners with it. We not only share The Story with others, we look for ways to show it to them as well.
 - a. Again, the proclamation of the kingdom of God ought never to be without an accompanying manifestation of it. We have been sent out “to proclaim” and “to heal”.
- C. And really this is just an extension of Jesus’ own mission and ministry, which we see quite plainly when we look even at the immediate context down in v. 11. For there we read that, when the crowds followed Him out to where He was in the wilderness, “he welcomed them and spoke to them of the kingdom of God and cured those who had need of healing.”

1. All that Jesus was while on the earth, the church is to continue to be in and through His Spirit. Word was always coupled with deed. Kingdom proclamation with kingdom manifestation.

Two Reasons Deed Ministry Is Critical in Our Day

- A. Keeping deed alongside word has always been important for the church of Christ, but it's perhaps never been quite as important as it is in our day. Let me just identify up front two reasons why I think this is the case.

(1) Deed Ministry Helps Us Re-Wire Associations

- A. The other day I had some meat on the barbecue and I set the timer on my phone so I could be sure I wouldn't get off doing something else and burn the steaks or whatever it was.
 1. But now here's the interesting thing. When the timer went off and it sounded out in my pocket, there was like this guttural, visceral response in me, where like my soul was literally in pain, cringing. And I clamored frantically for my phone so I could shut the thing off. And, as I experienced this, I thought (probably what you are thinking right now): "Man, that was strange. What was that all about? Why am I getting all worked up about a sound?"
 - a. And then it hit me. For some reason, the sound that the timer utilized at that point was the same sound I use on my phone's alarm clock. It's the sound that wakes me up in the morning. I hate that sound.
 - i. I have bad associations with that sound.
- B. It could be that the timer is going off because the cookies are ready to come out of the oven, or the tri-tip is ready to come off the grill—events which, by all accounts, should be cause for celebration. But if I'm hearing that sound, something in me shudders. The associations have been made.
- C. And now, here's the point. While the gospel will always sound a bit offensive to natural man, for many even the very mention of Jesus or the gospel or Christianity causes their soul to shudder.
 1. And this is the case not so much because of the message itself but because of the messengers—the Christians they have known or heard about in the news. The associations have been made.
- D. It doesn't matter how eloquently we speak of the wonders of heaven, the glories of grace, the love of god for sinners at the cross, all they hear is hypocrisy, a sales pitch, an old story that's brought more hatred into the world than love.
 1. They hear "Christian" and they think bigot, self-righteous, hypocrite. They think of the pastor who molested their sister, or the church member who spread devastating gossip about their family, or the televangelists with the slick hair and the gold rings who want your money but couldn't care less about your soul.

- a. Campus Crusade for Christ officially changed their name to Cru recently to try to get away from these sorts of associations. The crusades. What a horrendous blemish that is on the church's image before the watching world. They were finding that these associations were hindering their ministry as they've expanded into Europe and the Middle East.
- E. This is one of the reasons why it's so important that we keep deed ministry alongside the word like Jesus calls us to. Associations need to be re-wired.
 - 1. "Now I know that those who claim Christ don't always represent Him well. But let me assure you: there are cookies in the oven; there's a tri-tip on grill. The good news is really good. If you don't hear that in my words maybe you'll see it in my life."
 - a. Our good deeds open people up to the good news.

(2) Deed Ministry Helps Us Reach the "Nones"

- A. For modern man in the increasingly secularized world, the only thing that matters is what one can touch, taste, experience, feel. Because there is no God, there is no spiritual reality, there is no overarching metanarrative, there is no absolute truth, there is nothing outside of the physical—the atoms and the molecules. That's it.
- B. This is why statisticians and sociologists now talk about the "the rise of the nones"—people who are no longer affiliated with any religion, no longer interested in God or spiritual things at all.
 - 1. Commenting on this, Gabe Bullard penned an article for the National Geographic entitled *The World's Newest Major Religion: No Religion*. In it, he writes: "Around the world, when asked about their feelings on religion, more and more people are responding with a meh ['who cares']. The religiously unaffiliated, called 'nones,' are growing significantly. They're the second largest religious group in North America and most of Europe. In the United States, nones make up almost a quarter of the population. In the past decade, U.S. nones have overtaken Catholics, mainline protestants, and all followers of non-Christian faiths. There have long been predictions that religion would fade from relevancy as the world modernizes, but all the recent surveys are finding that it's happening startlingly fast. France will have a majority secular population soon. So will the Netherlands and New Zealand. The United Kingdom and Australia will soon lose Christian majorities. Religion is rapidly becoming less important than it's ever been, even to people who live in countries where faith has affected everything from rulers to borders to architecture."
- C. And, just to linger on this for a moment, this isn't merely the story for so many of the adults we rub shoulders with around here in the bay area, this is the story for their kids now as well. This is what the next generation is being taught.
 - 1. A few weeks ago, I was laying with the girls in their room before bed and Chloe's telling me how she was actually begging one of her classmates to receive Jesus. Which, I just thought, man this girl is bolder than I am! But this little boy's response was so sad. "I don't believe in God. I don't believe in heaven. I think we just die and that's it."

- a. That’s a little kindergartner. There’s nothing beyond this. Atoms and molecules. That’s the state of so many families in our city.
- D. So, recalling what we’ve been discussing for the past two weeks, if this is where modern man is at, how do you meet him in his story and slowly back him into The Story—of God, of the gospel, of the world as it truly is?
 - 1. Answer? You meet him in the physical. You meet him in the everyday stuff of his life. You meet him in the midst of things that matter to him. You meet him in the atoms and the molecules.
- E. In other words: You meet him with deed. You don’t just share The Story with your lips, you show The Story with your life. You give him something he can touch, taste, experience, feel.
 - 1. You open your wallet to help him make his mortgage payment.
 - 2. You clear your schedule so that you can be with him the day after his father suddenly dropped dead and he’s devastated.
 - 3. You lay your hands on him and you pray that God would take away the shooting pain in his lower back.
- F. And when the spiritual breaks into the physical like this you tell him where it came from. You get to matters of his soul by caring for the pressing needs of his body—from atoms and molecules to God almighty!
 - 1. Our good deeds open people up to the good news.

Outline

- A. So, hopefully, I’ve established a bit of the importance for this deed ministry. But now I want to press in a little further. I want to know: How do we do it? What does it look like?
 - 1. I’ve got two things for us in particular: (1) Pray the Miracle; and (2) Act the Miracle.

(1) Pray the Miracle

“To Heal”

- A. We first need to deal with what our text actually says. I’ve already been broadening out this concept of “to heal” to include acts of service and love, but technically, in our text, it means “to heal”—by the miraculous intervention of God.
 - 1. It means to do the sorts of things we’ve seen Jesus do up to this point in Luke—paralytics walking, lepers restored, flow of blood stopped, diseases cured, dead raised.
- B. And so we need to ask, is this sort of thing even relevant for our mission and ministries today? Or is this just an Apostle thing or early church thing?

Attesting to the Messengers

- A. There are many in the Christian world today who believe that the miraculous, the miraculous gifts in particular, are no longer in operation. Sure we pray for healing but, if we're honest, we don't necessarily expect it.
- B. They try to ground their reasoning in the Scriptures. Most commonly, the claim is that miracles, signs, and wonders, were given by God back in the early church to attest to the Apostles as God's chosen messengers. They were God's way of saying: "My words are coming through these men. Listen up!"
 - 1. With this being the case, then, the argument goes that, when the Apostles had run their race, and the canon of Scripture closed, there no longer remained a reason for these sorts of accompanying signs, and, therefore, the miraculous gifts ceased.
- C. Now, certainly, attesting to the validity of the Apostles is part of the purpose of the miraculous.
 - 1. That's why Paul, when defending his apostleship to the Corinthians, writes: "The signs of a true apostle were performed among you with utmost patience, with signs and wonders and mighty works" (2 Cor 12:12). "You know I'm the real thing, that my words have come from God, because "the signs of a true apostle were performed among you."

Attesting to the Message Itself

- A. But to limit its purpose to this is a simplistic and devastating reduction. When we look closer at the biblical data, we find that the miraculous, the gifts, are given by God to attest not only to the validity of the messengers, they also are given by Him to attest to the validity of the message itself—namely, the gospel.
 - 1. As Paul wrote earlier to the Corinthians: It was not just his apostleship that was confirmed by signs and wonders but "the testimony about Christ was confirmed among you" by them as well (1 Cor 1:6). The signs and wonders validated not just Paul but "the testimony about Christ", the gospel.
- B. Do you get the distinction here?
 - 1. If all the miracles do is attest to the apostles as the real thing, well, then we have no more need of the miracles because the apostles are gone.
 - 2. But if the miracles also attest to the gospel as the real thing, well, than the miracles remain perennially relevant, even to the end of this age.
 - a. Because we preach this gospel of the crucified and risen Lord to our friends and neighbors and coworkers. And Christ might want to attest to the authenticity of this message by showing up for them in miraculous ways.
 - i. The miracle, in this case, doesn't show me to be an Apostle, it shows Christ to be Savior and Lord!

- A. This is why Paul three times commands the Corinthian church to “earnestly desire the spiritual gifts” (1 Cor 14:1; cf. 12:31; 14:39).
1. Why would he care so much if all the gifts do is attest to his own apostleship? He wouldn’t.
 2. He cares so much that the Corinthians pursue the miraculous because he knows that such signs also vindicate the authenticity of our message. Because he knows that when an unbeliever sees these sorts of things going down, “falling on his face, he will worship God and declare that God is really among you” (1 Cor 14:25). “God is here! Jesus is alive!”
- B. Listen to Martyn Lloyd-Jones on this: “It is perfectly clear that in New Testament times, the gospel was authenticated in this way by signs, wonders and miracles of various characters and descriptions . . . Was it only meant to be true of the early church? . . . The Scriptures never anywhere say that these things were only temporary—never! There is no such statement anywhere.”

Letting the Text Search Us

- A. Now, does it seem like God chose to anoint the Apostles in a special way for this kind of miraculous ministry? Yes. But does that mean, therefore, that we should not pursue or pray for such things in our own ministries? No.
- B. So rather than interpret away this idea of healing and miraculous power in the name of Jesus, we ought instead to let our text search us a bit.
1. If we don’t see healing power alongside our proclamation of the kingdom, why not? Where is my faith? Am I too afraid to pray over sick people? Am I too afraid to act on words of wisdom or knowledge I feel the Lord has given me for another person?
 - a. It is one thing to earnestly seek and not see—God is sovereign, and His will be done (cf. Heb 2:4). But it is another thing to not seek or strive for such things at all.
- C. Brothers and sisters, may we rather align ourselves with those early disciples who prayed desperately for miracles to accompany and attest to their proclamation of the gospel: “²⁹ Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants to continue to speak your word with all boldness,³⁰ while you stretch out your hand to heal, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus” (Acts 4:29–30). “Show them the gospel is real God! Show them that Jesus is alive! As we share The Story, show it to them!”

(2) Act the Miracle

Love Is the Greater Miracle

- A. But there is more to this idea of healing than just praying the miracle. Sometimes we pray and the miracle doesn’t come. What then? Do we abandon the person in their time of need?

1. No way. It's in these times that we must not forget what Paul says in [1 Cor 13](#). Sandwiched in between his discussion of miraculous spiritual gifts, Paul essentially declares that love is, in fact, the greatest miracle of all.
 - a. Signs and wonders are a sight to behold, but a person who genuinely loves another so much that he will lay down his life for that person? That's something from another world! That's heaven touching earth! That's the greater miracle.
- B. What this means is that we not only pray the miracle, we act the miracle. We pray that God helps people with their finances, or with their depression, or with their illness. But we're also ready to open up our wallets, our homes, our lives if it will help.
 1. When we pray for God to remove the cancer from a friend but the cancer still remains, we don't walk away dejected, we press in all the more in love.
 - a. We schedule the meal trains for her family so she doesn't have to cook. We babysit the kids so she can go to her doctor appointments. We sit by her bedside after the chemo and just hold her hand as she recovers. We cry with her. We suffer with her. We truly love her.
- C. We work for healing in the stuff that is most pressing for her. And in that, we meet her in her story and start to walk with her back into The Story.
 1. Our love is just a little taste of His love. And we tell her that. So that she can experience healing at a level so much deeper than the skin.

Jesus Is Alive!

- A. At the end of the day, what we are really saying with all of our activity is that Jesus is the real thing. The word about His death and resurrection is true.
 1. He so loved us that He came down into our mess. He met us in things that seemed most important, most pressing, to us. He touched us there. He worked for healing there. And in so doing He also took us deeper. He went after wounds we didn't even know we had.
- B. He didn't just talk a good talk. He walked the road to Calvary. He suffered, bled, and died on that cross for the forgiveness of our sins that by His wounds we might be healed, reconciled to God.
 1. And because He rose from the dead, ascended into heaven, and poured out His Spirit upon us, that same kind of life and love energizes our hearts now.
 - a. So we can pray the miracle and act the miracle, all the while proclaiming the good news of the kingdom and of the King who's ultimately responsible for all of this.
- C. I'll leave you with the words of John Stott: "[T]he greatest single secret of evangelism or missionary effectiveness is the willingness to suffer and die." We will be most effective in our proclamation of the cross, when, in our great love for others, we start to look more and more like it.