



God's Heart for the World

So, our God is a generous God. Our God is a missionary God. Yet the very concept of mission is out of favor in today's pluralistic world. Pluralism is the popular ideology. It affirms the equal validity of every religion. Whereas we Christians insist that Jesus is unique! We believe in the finality, and the supremacy and uniqueness of Jesus Christ! We do not speak of Jesus the Great! Alexander the Great! Napoleon the Great! Charles the Great! But not Jesus the Great! He is not the Great! He is the Only! There is nobody like Him. He has successors and no competitors. He is unique! More than that, as we have already been reminded, missions is rooted in the nature of a generous God Himself.

So, as Rick has told you, my text is the whole Bible (chuckles from the crowd) though I devoutly hope you will not invite me to read it (more chuckles from the crowd). So, let's take a rapid overview of the Bible dividing it into its five main sections.

We look first at the OT, then at the Gospels, then at the Acts, then at the Epistles and finally at the Book of Revelation. And each successive stage is a further missionary disclosure.

- So, number 1 – the God of the Old Testament is a Missionary God. True! He is the God of Israel. But when He called Abraham, He not only promised to bless Abraham but to make Abraham a blessing to others. Not only to bless his family, but through him to bless all the families of the earth. So, we who gathered here today, are beneficiaries of a promise which God made to Abraham 4,000 years ago.
- Number 2 – the Christ of the Gospels, is a Missionary Christ. True! He said that His ministry was limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. But that was only a temporary, historical limitation. He added that through His death and resurrection and ascension, salvation would later be offered to the Gentiles to whom He would send His people in mission.

Friends, have you considered this? Even the Gospel of Matthew, which is the most Jewish of all four Gospels, makes this global perspectives clear. Matthew's Gospel, begins with the visit of the Magi, representatives of the nations. And Matthew's Gospel ends with the Great Commission to go into all the world and make disciples of the nations.

- Number 3 – the Holy Spirit of the Acts is a Missionary Spirit. We watch as we read the Acts, we watch enthralled with the Holy Spirit drives the church out to bear witness throughout the world. And He drives the church from Jerusalem, the capital of Jewelry to Rome the capital of the world.
- Number 4 – the church of the Epistles is a Missionary Church. True! The 21 letters of the NT, all deal with the interior life of the Church. Its doctrine, its unity, its holiness, its worship. But the NT also assumes that the Church is living in the world and is reaching out to the world in the Name of Christ.
- Number 5 – the climax of the Book of Revelation is a Missionary Climax. For John sees the redeemed people of God standing before the Throne of God from every nation and tribe and people and language. So, you see the mission of the Church is not going to be fruitless. On the contrary, it will result in a huge in-gathering from the nations. So vast as to be actually countless! Then at last, God's promise to Abraham will be fulfilled completely. And the spiritual descendants of Abraham will be as numerous as the stars in the night sky and the grains of sand on all the seashores of the world.

So, friends, let me recapitulate for a moment this rapid, biblical overview. The God of the OT is a Missionary God. He called one family in order to bless all the families of the earth. The Christ of the Gospels is a Missionary Christ. He commissioned His church to go and make disciples. The Spirit of the Acts is a Missionary Spirit for He drove His Church out in witness. The Church of the Epistles is a worldwide community. And the climax of the Revelation is a countless throng from every nation under heaven.

So, the religion of the Bible is a missionary religion. Mission cannot be dismissed as a regrettable deviation from religious tolerance. It cannot be dismissed as the recreation of the a few eccentric enthusiasts or fanatics. No, missions lies at the very heart of our generous God. The church without mission is a church no longer. Since an essential part of its identity is missing.

So, now listen, some of us need to repent. If we have allowed the missionary dimension of the church to drop out of our thinking, we need to repent. A church without mission is a church no longer. And if we have resisted or neglected the missionary dimension of the church, we must repent.

Now, tell me, do you claim to believe in God? He is a missionary God! You tell me you are committed to Christ? He is a missionary Christ! You claim to be filled with the Spirit? He is a missionary Spirit! You tell me you belong to the church? It's a missionary society! And you hope to go to heaven when you die? It's a heaven into which the fruits of world mission have been gathered! So, we must get involved. We cannot stand aloof from the mission of God. The authentic Christianity of the Bible is not a safe, smug, selfish, comfortable, escapist, little religion. No, it is an explosive, centrifugal force. It pulls us out from our self absorption and it flings us into God's world to witness and to serve.

One word before I close, William Booth, the founder of the Salvation Army, was speaking to a huge gathering of London Salvationists in 1885. And he asked them a question, "How wide is the girth of the world?" And from the sated ranks of the Salvationists came the response, "25,000 miles!" Then rolled Booth with his arms outstretched, "We must grow until our arms get right round about it." May God make us global Christians because He is a Global God! Amen!

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