
"Mission Possible: Should You Accept"
(Luke 24:44-49)
Pastor Timothy Song
September 3, 2017

(Luke 24:44-49)

⁴⁴ He said to them, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms."

⁴⁵ Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures. ⁴⁶ He told them, "This is what is written: The Messiah will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, ⁴⁷ and repentance for the forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. ⁴⁸ You are witnesses of these things. ⁴⁹ I am going to send you what my Father has promised; but stay in the city until you have been clothed with power from on high."

Main Points:

- 1. The Objective of God's Mission → Redemption and Restoration**
- 2. The Subject (and Target) of God's Mission → Jesus (all the nations)**
- 3. The Power Source/Strategy for God's Mission → The Word and the Holy Spirit**

INTRODUCTION:

"Your mission should you choose to accept..." That phrase comes from the movie franchise Mission Impossible. The movie is about agents who are given impossible tasks or missions. Usually the missions are so important that if they do not complete it, many lives are at stake. And you watch as Tom Cruise risks his life many times to complete the mission. But when the agency first calls them, they say, "Your mission should you choose to accept..." And the agent would reply, "I accept."

When we look at today's passage. We see a mission; God's mission. And there are three necessary components to a mission:

1. The Objective or the PURPOSE of the mission
2. The Subject of the mission
3. The Source or Strategy for completing the mission.

So, let's break down the text and find each of these components.

First, the objective of God's mission. Jesus says in v.44, "This is what I told you while I was still with you: Everything must be fulfilled that is written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets and the Psalms." We see God's objective and mission from the very beginning of Scripture in Genesis when God created all things. But very quickly in Genesis 3, we see the fall of man and how sin distorts God's original design of creation. **Therefore, God's plan and mission is to bring redemption. When we read through the Old Testament, that's THE major theme, primarily through the people of God, Israel. We constantly read about failure after failure of Israel disobeying God's commands and as a result of their sins, they are punished and suffer.** Even when God sent people like Abraham, Joseph, Moses, the Judges, David, the Prophets... There was no one that can save and redeem them from their sins. This truly was mission impossible.

Obviously, this way was not working, **but, what God promises throughout Scripture is a redemptive plan that is absolute and ultimate. And what Jesus is reminding His disciples of is that He is the fulfillment of that promise.**

Illustration: As today is Missions Reporting Sunday, I ask myself this question: Why do many of us who have gone on STMs come back on this spiritual high? One big thing is that our worldview of God expands dramatically. Here in Toronto, we can get caught up in all the things we have to do. God is limited to a small box we call our life. Even God's mission of redemption is about me. That God saved me. That God is with me. If we expand a little bit; God is with our church, our community. But when we go on missions, we see that God is everywhere. We see God working in all the places we go. We realize that God is a global God that cares for all His creation. Our worldview of who God is shatters and we get to see how great and big our God really is. It's not about just us, but about all nations, all the way from the beginning of creation; from the first man, Adam. Pause for a second and think about this. God has redeemed you. He has saved you. You are a part of this grand masterpiece called Redemption. It's humbling to even think that the God of the universe loves me to the point of saving me. But His love and heart is for all the nations. And you witness that when you go on missions.

Ok, the first point is that God's objective for His mission is redemption. The second point is that the subject of God's mission is Jesus.

Jesus is the agent that is sent to complete the mission. And it is only Jesus who can accomplish it. This is how Jesus became the fulfillment of God's mission of redemption. Christ had to suffer and rise again from the dead so that repentance for forgiveness of sins could be proclaimed in His name (v.46-47). The Bible is very clear that sinners cannot be reconciled to God by good works. If anyone could make it to God by good works, then there is no need for Christ to die on the cross. By His death, He paid the penalty that we deserved, satisfying God's perfect justice, so that He is free to offer a pardon to anyone who trusts in what Christ did on his/her behalf. This is why Christ's death was necessary. **Without it there can be no forgiveness of sins. There are two important things we learn from what Christ did on the cross: One, the cross demands that we repent of our sins. And two, we must proclaim forgiveness from the penalty of sin.**

Charles Spurgeon pointed out that Jesus began His ministry by preaching, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand" (Matt. 4:17) and He ends it by telling the disciples to proclaim repentance. Therefore, repentance is at the core of Jesus' teaching and ministry. So what is repentance then? Repentance means to turn to God from our sin. Again, Spurgeon explains what repentance is with four aspects: Illumination, humiliation, detestation, and transformation. We need God to open our eyes to the horrible weightiness and gravity of our sin (Illumination). Then we must humbly plead with God for mercy (Humiliation). As we plead with God, we begin to hate our sin (detestation). And finally, we leave the sin we formerly loved, from the inside out, starting with our hearts (transformation). Though we are saved by

His grace, through faith, in Christ alone, this is a lifelong process for a believer. Every day we must pursue holiness.

How can a person who has a hard heart toward God, who is blinded by pride in their own self-righteousness, who is dead in transgressions and sins, repent? That's mission IMPOSSIBLE. It is God who must open our eyes and heart to repent. Some of us might be thinking, "I've heard this many times. I know I have to repent," but you just can't seem to get to the point where you truly repent... ask God to give you a heart to see the gravity of your sins, to plead for mercy, to hate your sins and begin to process of mortifying them. Keep asking God until He gives you that heart! When He does, that's when you will know His grace and the power of the cross.

Forgiveness of sins is the first and foremost need of every person who has sinned against God. Sinners need to know how they can obtain forgiveness from God. The answer: Repent of your sins and trust in Christ's blood that was shed on the cross. The blood of Christ cleanses us from all sin. God's forgiveness is offered to us. But, it is also offered to others. Jesus told His disciples to proclaim this message of forgiveness "beginning from Jerusalem" (v.47). Think about what just happened in Jerusalem. They killed Jesus! They killed the Messiah! Even though they were warned repeatedly, even though Jesus performed many miracles, the religious leaders in Jerusalem murdered Jesus. I can picture the disciples thinking to themselves: "Jerusalem?! You want us to proclaim forgiveness of sins here? After all that has happened. After all they did to you...?" Some may have thought that the people in Jerusalem were the worst of all sinners. But by Jesus saying start in Jerusalem, it tells us that there is no sinner that God can't save and that our mission is to proclaim repentance and forgiveness of sins to all people.

Jesus is the Subject of God's mission. **And Jesus, once He has fulfilled His mission, gives us a mission. Our mission is to proclaim the Good News of Jesus Christ: that He is the Messiah who has come, suffered and died for our sins, and rose from the dead on the third day. Our mission is to preach the message of forgiveness through repentance of our sins. And our mission is to proclaim and preach this message to all nations. We are His witnesses.** We are the agents He is sending out. When we accept Jesus to be our Lord and Saviour, the only One who can save us from our sins, we also accept His mission. But in order for us to become agents of proclamation, we must repent of our sins and know the power that comes from the work of Christ on the cross. It is the redeemed who proclaim about the Redeemer.

Illustration: Going to India was, personally, a difficult time. I've never preached so much. I've never been asked to preach on the spot like that. But I remember one occasion where we had a Youth Program at the TIM Center. Many times I preached, I was worried about myself. But, as I was watching our team do our skit about Jesus knocking on the door waiting for us to open it, I realized that this may be the first and only time some people would hear the Gospel. All of a sudden, God revealed His heart for them and it wasn't about me: it was about proclaiming the Good News of Jesus because He is the only One who saves. I must confess, it is easier to proclaim the Gospel on STMs than it is here in Toronto. It's not right because people need to hear the message of Christ. They need Jesus just as much as the villagers in India do.

Christ gives us the mission of proclaiming repentance for the forgiveness of sins to all the nations. Are we doing this? Have we been obediently living out this mission? What's stopping you? There are two sources of power in this passage that is given to us to complete the mission, and this is the third point: we are given the Word of God and the Holy Spirit.

The disciples were to be witnesses of Christ. Faithful witnesses don't make up stories; they tell what they have seen and heard. And what they saw and heard was Jesus teaching and living completely in line with what God revealed in His Word. And for us, we are to be witnesses of Christ as well. Everything we need is in God's Word. God reveals Himself (who He is and what He has done) to us. He reveals to us our sin and need for a Saviour. He reveals to us about the Saviour, Jesus. We cannot just pick and choose what we want to share. We cannot just share things that may not offend people. Anything apart from what God's Word commands us to preach is not the full Gospel.

Jesus "opened their minds so they could understand Scriptures" (v.45). The disciples spent 3 years with Jesus. And even after witnessing the death and resurrection of Christ, they still needed Jesus to explain to them what Scripture meant. During the forty days between the resurrection and Christ's ascension, all Jesus did was teach them and help them to understand the Word of God in that He was the fulfillment of God's promise. How much more do we need to be in the Word, reading, meditating, studying, obeying... in order that Jesus may open our minds to understand what God is saying!

So, the Word of God becomes a tool and source of strength in obeying God's mission. But, Jesus also sent someone: **The Holy Spirit. To fulfill our mission, we must have the power of the Holy Spirit.** On the day of Pentecost, Jesus sent the Holy Spirit on His followers and what was the result? Peter stood up and proclaimed repentance! Since that day, all who repent and trust in Christ receive the Holy Spirit at the moment of salvation. We must learn to walk in the Spirit, not in the flesh, depend on His strength, and bear the fruit of the Spirit. It is the Spirit who gives us boldness to proclaim the Gospel. It is the Holy Spirit that provides us with the words to speak and the One who will open doors for the Word to be preached.

According to Christopher Wright, mission is all that God is doing in His great purpose for the whole of creation and all that He calls us to do in cooperation with that purpose. Missions is the multitude of activities that God's people can engage in, by means of which they participate in God's mission. So for those who went on STM, it was an opportunity to be reminded of who Jesus is and what He has done. But it was also an opportunity to proclaim the Gospel; that through Jesus, we have the forgiveness of sins and are redeemed. But going on Short Term Missions is NOT the only way to do missions. If missions is an activity for God's people to engage in, everything we do such as understanding and teaching the Word, worship, fellowship, prayer, the pursuit of holiness, serving can be a form of missions. But they must all be rooted in God's mission: **to proclaim repentance for forgiveness of sins in Christ's name to all the nations.** The purpose of all those things we do is to proclaim Christ and His Gospel.

Do you ever wonder what it would have been like to be there with Jesus when He was here on earth? Do you wonder what the disciples would have seen and felt? They were with Jesus for 3 years, heard what He preached, saw what He did, witnessed His death AND resurrection. They were eye-witnesses to all of this! This passage is at a very important time (after resurrection and before ascension). And all Jesus did was teach His disciples the Scriptures and how He is the fulfillment of God's promises! And it was with this that the disciples were able to continue the work of the Lord and become witnesses to all nations.

Recall a time in your life when the cross of Christ overwhelmed you, when you were moved by the Gospel. Only when we live as redeemed can we fulfill the mission Jesus gave us. An impossible mission was made possible through Jesus Christ. By faith, we believe that He is our Saviour and Redeemer and we embrace this mission joyfully and proclaim the Gospel: we proclaim the repentance for forgiveness of sins. Regardless of whether you went on STM or not, we are all called

to be agents of God's mission wherever we go. May the redeemed of the Lord rejoice and proclaim the Good News of Jesus. Let's pray.