

Can I Get A Witness to the Ends of the Earth?

Acts 1:8 - 8 But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth."

Matthew 16:13–19 - 13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. 18 And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

I remember the first time I went swimming. I was about 4 years old, and I was standing at the edge of the pool and thinking, there is no way I am getting in there. Then this kid probably about 6 came up to me and said jump in, I was like no, I'm afraid. He said OK, I'll help you and he pushed me in. I started splashing and flopping, then I stood up and realized it was only about 2 feet of water and that which I was afraid of, became a place where I enjoyed being.

When people hear about going to the ends of the earth, some people's first reaction is, there is no way I am going there, when what you are afraid of actually may become a place of calling where you enjoy because you are in the will of God.

Two Sundays ago, we began our three-part series on Acts 1:8. Where Jesus gives the plan for reaching the lost and making an impact in this world.

We talked about how He promised they would receive the power of the Holy Spirit to accomplish His plan to spread the gospel. They were to start in Jerusalem, the community. Then move to Judea and Samaria, the region they were in, for us that is Kansas City Metro. Then they were to launch to the ends of the earth, which is where we are today.

The first week we talked about reaching our Jerusalem and the goal to be present and partners to our community. We stated our Vision of our SKC Campus: To see the life of our church resemble the life of those living in our 2 to 5 mile radius or have less than a 15min drive to our church.

Last week we learned that to reach our Judea and Samaria, our city, we must be here on purpose, be here for the long haul, and see our future is grounded in the successful future of the city. Today we want to be challenged to be lights beyond our city, and into the whole world. That sounds like a daunting task but remember this began with the promise that we WILL have power to do exactly that.

In the text today Matthew tells us in vs. 13 that Jesus has led his disciples to the district of Caesarea Philippi. Caesarea Philippi was located about 25 miles northeast of the Sea of Galilee, so, this isn't some

place you could say you stopped by because you were in the neighborhood...Jesus was intentional in bringing them to this place. In the first century, Caesarea Philippi was known for its pluralistic Culture. It is told that the pagan fertility god named PAN was born in a cave in that region. Pan was the legendary god of nature, and Pan worship was huge in that area. Alongside the temples of Pan were towering structures and temples devoted to Emperor worship. And, the Jordan River originated from this region, so ancient Judaism also revered this site and had monuments present to mark its significance.

So here we are at a site that has been used for pagan worship, worship to Caesar, and has ties to Judaism...and Jesus asked two questions to help us see what we are called out as the church to do.

Jesus says in our passage, "I will build my Church". The word used in the New Testament that translates as the Church is Ecclesia. It is actually translated as "called out ones." The apostles in writing the New Testament used the word ecclesia 112 times for the church. The idea is that we are in the world, but we are called out to be lights in the world, called out to be different, in the world. Called out to go back into the world and let the world know we serve a risen savior who is in the world today to bring life, joy and peace, in all the world.

What I pray we see today is that as the church, the Ecclesia, the called-out ones, we are called out, not to hide out, but to stand out.

There are three lessons I want us to learn about being the called-out church to go into the world, are you interested?

The first lesson we learn is...

1- We are not called out to impress.

Matthew 16:13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets."

Jesus asked who do men say that I am, and the response was impressive. You would think that Jesus would be proud to be mentioned by such greats as the names listed.

Take John the Baptist---a strong leader, one who did not mince words and told what was on his mind...He was so strong in his conviction that he even spoke the truth to King Herod about his relationships and had his head taken off because of it. How proud would you be to be mentioned in such company?

What about Elijah---a mighty prophet of God that when faced with a challenge of 450 prophets of Baal stood his ground, trusted God and watched God make fools of the pagan worship while devouring an offering that had been doused with water three times. Anyone would be flattered to even be thought of in the same company as Elijah. Someone mentioned with this name must be doing something great.

And we can't forget about Jeremiah who when under persecution cries out to the Lord and says, I am being mocked and laughed at, but even in the midst of ridicule and embarrassment if I try not to speak about God it becomes like a fire in my bones, and I can't hold it in. What a preacher!

But when these titles and comparisons come to Jesus, you don't see Jesus satisfied with the comments, you don't see Jesus basking in his achievement of notoriety even though all these comparisons are inadequate. Rather than Jesus taking in all the compliments, He quickly turns to the disciples and asked, "but who do you say that I am?"

Jesus could have said really Elijah, I can see John the Baptist, but Elijah, I'm in pretty good company. But what we see is, Jesus did not come to impress. Jesus did not come to be compared or to see how popular he could become. He came to seek and to save that which was lost.

In John 6 after Jesus had fed the Five Thousand, we read in John 6:30 So they said to him, "Then what sign do you do, that we may see and believe you? What work do you perform?"

Jesus goes on to say you are looking for bread when I'm trying to show you, I am the bread. I am the life...I am what you are looking for...I did not come to do miracles and impress or be popular.

I think Too often we as the church feel as if we are called out to impress. We focus our attention on our buildings...our programs...our numbers...our community status thinking if we poke our chest out enough the world will look at us and say...Look at what they are doing...But I'm here to tell you today that the world is not impressed because there is no power in that. God will not honor us in our attempts to be impressive.

K.P. Yohannan in his book, *Revolution in World Missions* says,

The church Jesus called out of this world to be separated unto Himself has, to a great extent, forgotten her reason for existence. Her loss of balance is seen in the current absence of holiness, spiritual reality and concern for the lost. Substituted for the life she once knew are teaching and reaching for prosperity, pleasure, politics and social involvement. – *Revolution in World Missions*-K.P. Yohannan

If God was trying to impress the world, then why would he send Jesus to be born in a manger...If God was trying to impress the world, then why would he make Jesus the son of a carpenter...If Jesus was trying to impress the world, then why would he allow himself to suffer a humiliating death on the cross.

Of the approximately 8 billion people on planet Earth, about 3.2 billion are considered unreached or least reached. More than 7,000 people groups are classified as unreached. That's more than 40% of the total population.

When you step into the country of Algeria, the over 45 million unreached people do not care that you have a name in your home city. When you step into Cambodia, the over 15 million unreached people do not care that you have a doctor degree and a full bank account. When you step into India - 1 billion 352 million 887 thousand unreached people are not impressed by us sweeping in with all the answers to

their cultural questions. They need to hear and see Jesus. They need to see Jesus in our desire to see them saved, they need to see Jesus in our efforts to show them the light. They need to see Jesus in our not turning our backs and hoping someone will reach them. They need to see the Church of God armed with the love of God humbly coming to be the hands and feet of God in places that may be uncomfortable for us to go, knowing that by the power of God we can see lives changed.

We have to be careful not to turn to the world and say look at us, what do you have to say about us now, and have the world look at us and say, that's great...but we are still dying.

We have to know and live like we understand that as God sends us into the world, we are not called out to impress the world.

1-We are not called out to impress the world...

2- We are not called out to be unsure.

Matthew 16:15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven.

Notice the first question was aimed at the generic public...those who have not been close but who may have just seen from a distance or heard...what is the word on the street?

The second question was aimed at those who supposedly had a relationship with him. His focus turns from who do they-the generic public/the passersby, to who do you my close friends, my nearest companions, those who have walked with me and seen me up close, who do you say that I am?

This is an interesting question because you would have thought that this group would have no problem answering such a question. You remember in Mark 4:35 when the disciples' boat was being tossed to and fro and they thought they were going to lose their life and they run to Jesus in panic and wake him up asking how can he sleep at a time like this and he raises up and says Hush be still and the text says the wind died down and it became perfectly calm and the bible says the disciples begin to question one another asking what kind of man is this that even the wind and the sea obey him...what kind of man is this that nature itself has to listen to his command...who are we really dealing with.

Now that they are at this point in the journey, Jesus still knowing that there was some doubt in the group had to ask who do you say that I am?

And Peter the Leader unafraid of speaking before thinking jumps up and says, You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God. And I like Jesus' response to a man with an ego and a temper who specializes in trying to make himself stand out. Jesus says Peter before you start patting yourself on the back, the reason you are able to give the answer is because you are blessed by the Father. Your confidence is not self-willed. Your eager response is not something you can muster up. The ability to stand with confidence and make such a declaration only comes by the power of the Father who has placed it in you.

Jesus says, we as the church do not have to try to muster up courage. We don't have to try to talk ourselves into being sure of our source of strength. If we rely on flesh and blood, we will work ourselves to death only to end up with lack luster results. All we have to do is rely on the power that Paul says in Ephesians 3:20 is at work within us, that lets us be able to be confident and know for sure that God is able. This is all we need to know to give God our heart so we can stand with assurance when faced with difficulties and struggles that come with reaching beyond our comfort zones and into the world.

John Piper is quoted as saying,

"God is pursuing with omnipotent passion a worldwide purpose of gathering joyful worshipers for Himself from every tribe and tongue and people and nation. He has an inexhaustible enthusiasm for the supremacy of His name among the nations. Therefore, let us bring our affections into line with His, and, for the sake of His name, let us renounce the quest for worldly comforts and join His global purpose." — John Piper

You can find our church's global mission opportunities on our website and pray and listen to hear if God may be leading you to go with one of our mission teams. Beginning August 21st, we will be hosting a class called Perspectives. (Can we place the Perspectives sign-up slide here?) Perspectives helps believers from all walks of life see how they can get threaded into God's story of redeeming people from every tribe, tongue, and nation to Himself. You will hear stories and testimonies from missionaries to help you see where God may be leading you, locally or globally. So far, we have about 50 people sign-ed up and there is plenty of room, you can go to our website and sign-up on our events page or go to perspectives.org and search for Kansas City.

You can also find a list of missionaries we support on our website. Don't underestimate the power of your prayers for our missionaries. Understand, some are called to walk into an unknown country and minister physically the gospel to people they have not met and cultures they have not been a part of and are learning of. Some, are called to be the prayer warriors that undergird those walking into the ends of the earth, praying fervently for God to do amazing things in the midst of people who do not know him. Wesley Duewel of One Mission Society International says,

"We can reach our world, if we will. The greatest lack today is not people or funds. The greatest need is prayer." — Wesley Duewel, head of One Mission Society International

Dave Davidson, author of the book, *Pray Along Operation World Mission Prayers* says,

"In our lifetime, wouldn't it be sad if we spent more time washing dishes or swatting flies or mowing the yard or watching television than praying for world missions?" — Dave Davidson

Some of the greatest missionaries will never step foot on foreign land, but their knees will be worn from their time praying for those feet who do.

One of the ways we have to reach the ends of the earth in addition to prayer is through our partnership with ISI, International Student Incorporated. (Can we place the ISI donation event slide here?) Next Sunday we are asking you to bring items needed to furnish an apartment for an International student coming to our country with little to nothing to start with. You can find the list of needed items on our events page. We have the opportunity to donate items to students who are from other countries, some from countries that Christian missions are not allowed. When students come to America, what will it say

to them, when they walk into their room and see it is furnished and the items they need to function are provided by a Christian family who gets to know them and be the light to them and plant a seed in them that God can use through them to go back into a country you can't go to and spread the gospel. If you are confident and sure in who you serve, you will be convinced that God can take a dresser or a couch and turn it into a lifeline that not only provides physically but springs up wells of new life that flow beyond what we can imagine.

That happens when God's people stop wondering what they can do, and move toward what God can do and be assured that he can take your little, and provide a harvest.

1-We are not called out to impress. 2-We are not called out to be unsure.

3- We are called out to stand out.

Matthew 16:18 "And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

After Peter makes his statement, Jesus makes a declaration that on this rock the Gates of Hell will not prevail against it. – From Jesus' declaration we see...

The church will be built – On this rock I **will** build my church – the phrase is emphatic not questionable. This give us assurance in what we do as the church that it has the emphatic promise of Jesus the Christ that it will be built. We don't have to make it happen. Jesus is the builder all we have to do is submit to His will.

We also see The church will be built on a solid foundation – The rock that is mentioned has a number of ways to be interpreted.

Some say Jesus was speaking of Himself. Some say Jesus was speaking of Peter as one of the apostles who would be given the charge to spread the message. Others say Jesus was speaking of Peter's statement that Jesus is the Son of God, and that statement is the foundation for which the church would stand.

I believe that Jesus was saying I am the foundation, He praised Peter for his statement then introduced Himself as the foundation on which the church would stand. In verse 18 Jesus says you are Peter the Greek word is Petros-a piece or fragment of a rock such as a man might throw. Then he says upon this Rock Petra-bedrock or mountain ledges, in contrast with separate pieces of rock. The change in the Greek word I believe shows Jesus shifting the attention to himself as the foundation. This is consistent with Paul when he later calls Jesus the chief cornerstone. The brick by which all other bricks will have their support. The importance of a solid foundation is immeasurable.

I was looking at a picture of the great wall of China and it was fascinating to see, but what makes the bricks on top so great is the bricks on the bottom, the foundation bricks, the bricks that hold the other bricks in place. If the foundation bricks don't hold up then the wall never has a chance to be great. They never even get off the Ground, but because the foundation is strong the wall can be called Great.

Jesus says on this Rock, the rock Peter just described as the “son of living God”, the rock that Peter just described as “the Christ”, on this foundation will I build my Church. With such a strong foundation, Jesus declares that the Church will be the aggressor not just the defender.

The gates of hell will not prevail against it. Now what does that mean? Well, in those days...what did a gate do? It kept people out. A gate was used for defense. And so, the question here is “who’s gate is it?” And the answer is Hell’s gate.

The vision Jesus is casting of his church is not one on the defense, but one on the offense. We’re on the attack...we are called to be His hands and feet and eyes and beating hearts and to be His catalysts and little redeemers in the age, season, time, and place that He’s put us in. We are to grab His battering ram of love and do good to those who harm us, pray for those who persecute us, wash one another’s feet, serve the poor, invite the outcast to come in, find those who are lost, make broken things whole. In their book, *In Church as it is in Heaven*-Jamaal Williams and Timothy Paul Jones say,

Practices of hospitality seem to have been one of the reasons why ancient pagans were attracted to Christianity. In the fourth century, the emperor Julian shared this complaint about Christians with his fellow pagans: “Why don’t we notice that it is their benevolence to strangers, their care for the graves of the dead, and the supposed holiness of their lives that have done the most to increase their numbers?” – *In Church as it is in Heaven*-Jamaal Williams and Timothy Paul Jones

We are to pound at our enemies gate with all of our resources, with all of our energies, and with all of His power so that what Jesus prayed will come true through us, that His kingdom would come, His will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. And as we do, not even the gates of hell will stand a chance.

We have to determine to stand out not because we are impressive, but impact this world for God because we are sure who Jesus is. If we would understand who We have with us in this fight...If we would understand who stands before us, we would echo the statement of Peter and Say “Jesus you are the Christ the Son of the Living God”...Jesus you are the one who rose from the dead with all power in your hand...Jesus you are the savior who takes away the sins of the World...Jesus you are the Head of the Church...Jesus you are the Foundation that enables us not just to stand, but to stand strong, Jesus you are the foundation that enables us not just to stand but to stand tall, Jesus you are the foundation that enables us not just to stand ...but to stand out....and when the church stands out, rooted in the foundation of Jesus Christ the resurrected Lord with all power and authority...we will stop running and hiding, but we will take charge, ready for our orders from the savior who tells us to go into the world. The church’s missions rallying cry is The Great Commission: Matthew 28:19 Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

“Go” is an action word...“Go” is an aggressive word...“Go” is not a “run and hide” word...

“Go” is a “standing out” word.

So let's Go, into our city, let's Go into our community, and let's not be afraid, but be sure of our call to Go to the ends of the world.

Can I get a witness in our community? Can I get a witness in our city? Can I get a witness to the ends of the earth?

Well, Let's Go! And the church said Amen and Amen!...Let's Pray.