

Sermon Series: Intentional Disciples—Purposeful Mission—Lord of Life Lutheran, Westfield, IN—5/21/2006

Theme: “Witness to your world”

Text: Acts 1: 8 and Acts 16: 6-10

Intro: Ills.: Near-sightedness

Theme: We must always submit our excitement of mission and ministry to people in other cultures to the lordship and plan of Jesus as opens windows of opportunity to share the good news where he will be glorified.

But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and TO THE ENDS OF THE EARTH.” Acts 1:8

Understanding what God’s will for world-wide evangelism is

- To show his unconditional love to all people
 1. *For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. John 3: 16*
- To bring the message of repentance and forgiveness to all nations
 1. *Jesus told them, “This is what is written: The Christ will suffer and rise from the dead on the third day, and repentance and forgiveness of sins will be preached in his name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem. You are witnesses of these things.” Luke 24: 46-48*
- To have the world-wide proclamation of the gospel usher in the last day
 1. *And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come. Mat. 24: 14*

Jesus can open our hearts to recognize when our will may be ‘righteous’ but not of God

- **Print and read Acts 16: 6-10**
- Differentiating between *good intentions* and *eternal perspectives*
 1. Having completed his first missionary swing, Paul felt Asia was the next logical step
 2. God may have foreseen mortal dangers in Paul’s continued efforts in Asia
 3. Often our efforts fall silent when invested in short term “good intentions” without a connection to God’s lasting plan
- Moving from *one dimensional* to Jesus’ *multi-angled* viewpoint
 1. **Ills.: Discerning the obvious**
 2. Paul saw Asia/Bythynia as the next *obvious* mission fields when God saw all of Europe waiting
 3. Our plans often fall victim to “short-sightedness” because we don’t seek God’s long range view
- Not settling for *morally neutral* but adopting *perfectly tuned* plans
 1. Paul’s plan was not evil; yet it was not God’s will (*Spirit forbade, did not permit -vvs. 6,7*)
 2. Seeking His blessings in Christ and through Christ involves turning the *plan* and the *result* over to Him
 - *“And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect.” Romans 12:2*
- Opening our eyes and ear and heart to the pressing need God lays before us
 1. Through *His Word* (When God has spoken, the matter is settled.)
 2. Through the *Spirit’s testimony* in my heart
 - a. Twice Paul was forbidden by the Spirit and then he sent a vision to move Paul (vss. 6-10)
 - b. *“We also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.” 1 Cor. 2:13*
 - c. When the Spirit speaks, we need to listen and respond (*as soon as . . .immediately vs. 10*)
 3. Through *accountability to other believers* (*we concluded vs. 10*)
 - a. Often you and I see what you are looking for when we are the only ones looking at a situation/dilemma
 - b. Testing thoughts/perspectives on Jesus’ will for our mission thru other objective, spiritually-directed believers
 - c. **Ills.: When a simple majority won’t do**
 4. Through *prayer in times of opening and closing doors*
 - a. *I know what you have done. See, I have opened a door in front of you that no one can shut. You only have a little strength, but you have paid attention to my word and have not denied my name. Rev. 3:8*

Near-sightedness

What destroys perspective is our penchant to measure ministry on too small a scale. We lose the wide-angle view because we're riveted on the close-up. Using a microscopic lens, even a harmless spider looks like a hairy, horrible monster. Most of us would never clean cobwebs from the house if we focused on the close-up view of spiders.

Discerning the obvious

A man went to see his doctor in an acute state of anxiety. "Doctor," he said, "you have to help me. I'm dying. Everywhere I touch it hurts. I touch my head and it hurts. I touch my leg and it hurts. I touch my stomach and it hurts. I touch my chest and it hurts. You have to help me, Doc, everything hurts." The doctor gave him a complete examination. "Mr. Smith," he said, "I have good news and bad news for you. The good news is you are not dying. The bad news is you have a broken finger."

When a simple majority won't do

Ideally, when Christians meet, as Christians, to take counsel together, their purpose is not--or should not be--to ascertain what is the mind of the majority but what is the mind of the Holy Spirit--something which may be quite different.

Citation: English Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher

Acts 16:6-10

⁶They passed through the Phrygian and Galatian region, having been forbidden by the Holy Spirit to speak the word in Asia; ⁷and after they came to Mysia, they were trying to go into Bithynia, and the Spirit of Jesus did not permit them; ⁸and passing by Mysia, they came down to Troas. ⁹A vision appeared to Paul in the night: a man of Macedonia was standing and appealing to him, and saying, "Come over to Macedonia and help us." ¹⁰When he had seen the vision, immediately we sought to go into Macedonia, concluding that God had called us to preach the gospel to them. [NASB]