

Good Samaritan
World Mission Sunday Year B
02/04/18

Please pray with me. Lord you have called us to be a people who share the faith in you with all those you bring into our path. Help us Lord to have eyes to see the Gospel at work, help us to bring about the restoration in the world, and help us to step out in faith in order to see your kingdom come. Amen

World Mission Sunday is a day set aside by our Province in order to focus on the mission of the wider, global church. Because you worship in an Anglican church you are blessed to be apart of a wider Global church. You can look on a world map and see a plethora of churches all over the world. World Missions Sunday is a chance to focus on the work Christ is doing in our world and asking the questions of where else does He want the church to go and who in our midst might God want us to share the Gospel.

The past summer our Provincial Meeting was titled Mission on Our Doorstep. While I did not attend this conference in person I did attend it virtually. The kids and I spent most of the days listening to talks and keynote speakers. We were blown away with the continual challenge to think beyond ourselves to where was it that God wanted to move. World Mission Sunday is meant to challenge us to think beyond ourselves and maybe our own comfort zones. It is meant to challenge us to think beyond the people that we know and instead broaden our perspective on the world.

Our Genesis passage today points us in the direction of opening our perspective on the kingdom of God. Abram is called on to leave his country, people, family, and everything he knows to a place God will tell him. Abram is not given the whole plan he is not told exactly how long it will take, where he will go, or even what he will do. Instead he is told to go and God will tell him along the way where he is to go. Can you even imagine going somewhere in this day in age without a plan? I used my GPS for about two months when we first moved here just to get to the grocery store. I primarily used it because I couldn't stand the idea of roaming around in a van full of kids longer then I needed to be. I love knowing where I am going in the most efficient manner possible.

Abram was being asked to trust God in a profoundly deep way. God was inviting Abram into a life of adventure and a life that would be provided for. God promised to bless Abraham for his obedience, and to make him a blessing to others. Abram was not going to know all the steps along the way but if he was faithful God would be faithful to him. The story of Abram sets us up today to remember that we too are invited into a life that looks beyond just what we know and trusts God to provide for us in order to bless the nations.

When Chris and I came here over a year ago to interview we trusted that God would speak to us about his plan for our lives. We had come to a land we did not know. A land that looked, smelled, and felt completely different then what we knew. It was scary and yet we trusted that God would speak and he did. There hasn't been a single moment in this transition when we have doubted God's call on our lives. We feel deeply blessed to be among you and thankful for the chance to grow in the work of the Gospel.

The story of Abram is meant to inspire us to go when God calls us and to take the Gospel into places that may feel foreign or different. Sometimes this means picking up and moving very far away and sometimes this means being prepared to open the door of our hearts and homes to others. One of my favorite talks given at the Provincial meeting was by a woman named Lisa Espinelli Chinn. She and her husband began a vibrant ministry to international students. She spoke passionately about how there are about 1 million international students in our country and how they will go back to their own countries and move into significant positions of influence. The easiest way to share the Gospel is by opening your homes in hospitality. It is when we are kind and generous through our own time that others are shocked by the love of God.

Mrs. Chinn told a story of a small church in South Carolina that was out in the middle of nowhere and yet felt a calling to reach people from other nations. So they marketed on a college campus 45 minutes away a weekend of southern hospitality, airplane rides, canoeing, and fishing. In that one weekend a small church hosted a team of international students showering them with love and stories of Jesus. One of the students kept coming back to church and seeking after God. He eventually became a follower of Jesus. His life was changed and one the nations was reached. God desires to reach the nations of the world through us!! He wants us to participate in his kingdom work.

Fr. Chris and I have often talked about how Jacksonville is becoming a hub for immigrants and refugees into our country. What would it look like for Church of the Good Samaritan to offer hospitality? How might we be called into Gospel ministry with those who arrived from all over the world? Our food giveaway is one of those ways that we can reach people. Shortly after Hurricane Irma I had the chance to pray with a family that had just arrived from Puerto Rico. They were here to live with a daughter and consider starting over. The love of the people who serve at the food pantry visibly shined into the lives at a point of great struggle and vulnerability for them. God's kingdom work was done on that day and it was beautiful to behold.

Our Revelation passage today gives us a snapshot of what it will be like to be in heaven praising God. Every nation, tribe, tongue, people, and language will be before the throne of the Lamb. They will be waving branches and praising God (doesn't it sound like Palm Sunday :)). Everyone will not be American or English speaking but rather a large variety of skin colors, languages, and church backgrounds. They will be united in their love of the Lamb and for His gracious washing of their sins with his blood. The worshipers will be united in the Lamb and they will be one. The Lord promises that they will dwell in the tent of the Lamb with no suffering, pain, or sorrow.

Our churches are supposed to look racially diverse. We are to come from many different backgrounds and seek to welcome those who the Lord brings. I had the chance to attend a college missions conference called Urbana. It was held in a huge stadium which was filled to the brim. During their worship times it was incredible to see the diversity of people who were in the room and to hear them pray. I had never experienced anything like it, people spoke in varying languages and tongues. When worship songs came on some people translated the songs into their own languages. One beautiful harmony with many different sounding words. That was the closest I have ever experienced to the Revelations passage of today. Heaven is meant to be

filled with people from all around the world. But how will they know the Gospel and get to hear the good news of Jesus unless we share it with them?

Each of us has a totally different set of circumstances in our lives that either give us freedom or limit us in some way. How might God be calling you and your family in this season that you find yourself in to His missional kingdom work? I often get nervous when I hear people at this point in a sermon because I always think to myself, I kinda have my hands full right now. While that is ever so true that doesn't mean I am off the hook. Jesus can always find something for us to do.

Maybe it is going on the mission trip to Cuba or maybe it is financially supporting those who are going. Maybe it is opening your door to your home to someone for a meal and fellowship. I have had one such relationship since we have moved where I have slowly developed a relationship with this woman and her children. She felt free to just pop in the other day and we had a brief conversation while I made biscuits and soup, and loudly instructed the boys on taking out the garbage. Despite how "full" my life appears I can always welcome someone in and share the love of Jesus. It doesn't have to be the really big missional movement of going overseas and starting up a drastic ministry. It could just be loving someone in your world more, being kind when you want to be harsh, or being present when you want to check out and do something "more interesting".

We are told today in our Gospel passage of Matthew that to follow the risen Lord means to take the message of the Gospel to wherever He sends us. Jesus called the eleven disciples to meet him at the mountain in Galilee. Some of the disciples doubted that it was really him and others worshipped Jesus. He commanded them not just asked them or told them it might be beneficial to their ministries if they followed. Jesus commanded them to take the Gospel to all nations. Since Jacksonville is becoming more of a hub of immigration perhaps your sidewalk could be a place of great place of sharing or your children's school?

Faith was not for Israel alone but for the whole world. Sometime as Americans I think we need to be reminded that faith is not just for us but for the whole world. Jesus commanded them to go and baptise the nations in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. We too as followers of the resurrected Lord need to be about the coming of individuals to faith. Whether we are super social or would rather flee from church before we speak to anyone. God is calling each and everyone of us to reach out to others with his love, so that more people might stand under the tent of the Lamb in heaven.

So are you called to go to another land to share your faith with people you may not understand? Then trust God and go, He will provide for you just like Abram was cared for. He will bless you and make you a blessing to others. Are you a fervent prayer? Then pray for those who go, and pray for those who serve your prayers could mean so much in the form of encouragement.

Are you a generous giver? Then give to the work of missions and the work of ministry. Inquire at the church who are missionaries are and what their needs are. Are you gifted with hospitality? Then ask the Lord for someone to welcome into your home and to share your love of Jesus. God has work for all of us to do and never believe your hands are too full. God promises to give us good godly work so that we might bring about his Kingdom here on Earth. So to God be glory now and forever!