

Matthew 4:12-25
(Isaiah 61:1-3; Romans 1:16-17)
“On Mission with Jesus”

Introduction

Jesus has defeated the tempter in the wilderness by taking his stand in the power of God’s Spirit through the truth of God’s Word. Now he begins his public ministry, and we find in Matthew’s account a number of compelling pictures that, taken together, serve as a sort of composite or collage of Jesus’ own ministry. This is very important for more than merely historical reasons, because *our* ministry is nothing less than a continuation of *his* ministry. Jesus passed his ministry on to his followers with the words, “As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

Paul understood this in quite literal terms by describing the church as the Body of Christ, animated by his Spirit and entrusted with his ministry. In other words, Jesus continues his ministry through us. This is why he said that we would do even greater things than he did in his days on earth: he was limited to one time and place, one cultural context. But we are able to go everywhere, carrying Christ’s ministry to every culture on earth, and declaring the good news of salvation in every language. *So it is crucial that we understand Jesus’ ministry in order to understand the mission he has entrusted to us.*

This morning, I hope to focus on four particular pictures portrayed in our text, four pictures that help us understand what it means to be on mission as a community of Christians and as individuals who have been entrusted with nothing less than the life and ministry of God’s Son, our Lord Jesus Christ. Please remember that these pictures are not merely for pastors or elders and deacons, or for those who decide to go further than most in pursuing life in Christ. This is what the Bible conceives as the normal Christian life, the life of everyone who understands the implications of having been brought by grace from death to life and called to be a disciple of Jesus.

Body

- 1. We have been given *a place* to serve: Jesus – who came not to call the righteous but sinners to repentance – sought out a strategic center of darkness as his mission center for revealing the light of the gospel of grace (4:12-16).**

- 2. We have been given *a message* to communicate: Jesus’ message was clear and consistent: “Repent, for the Kingdom of heaven is at hand” (4:17).**

- 3. We have been given *a community* to love and serve along side: Jesus gathered a community for both companionship and multiplication of ministry, and from this first community his church has grown (4:18-22).**

- 4. We have been given *a strategy* to validate the gospel message: Jesus' ministry strategy involved both words and actions; he proclaimed and explained the kingdom of heaven, and then demonstrated it in ministries of compassion (4:23-25).**

Conclusion

Everything in our culture, even our American church culture, encourages us at best to add some form of religion to our already full schedules, to use it to provide a bit of respite, a break from what we think of as the real world, or as a place to make friends or to try to do something good for someone less fortunate. These and similar clichés describe the church-going habits of most American Christians.

But we have been invited into the only thing that will outlast human history, outlast even this cosmos in its present form, because it is the meaning of history and of the cosmos, the reason that God created us and all things. God's kingdom alone will stand when every other empire and every other power have fallen to the dust and been consigned to the grave. The church is meant to display the nature and destiny of humanity as God conceived it when he made us in his own image for communion with him and with one another, and placed us as his stewards of the creation.

This mission is what he has set out to accomplish for his glory and for our good. Into this great task he invites us as his partners. And this is what we mean when we speak of being a church and a people on mission. Why spurn the greatest offer of all, the most extraordinary invitation a person could receive? Won't you join the living God in his great mission of bringing humanity back to its created purpose and his promise that he will at last make all things new?