

Thursday

OUR MISSION GENEVIEVE JAMES

Greetings Site Managers,

What exceptional times we live and serve in. You have offered your service “in such a time as this”. I pray for the same Spirit that rose Jesus from the dead to dwell in you, revitalizing and refreshing you in your service as agents of Life and Hope in this season of great distress and global calamity.

This week we have been exploring some of the post-resurrection appearances of Jesus. Now, if there were no post-resurrection sightings of Christ then there would have been no eyewitness testimony that Christ had indeed risen. The post-resurrection appearances of Christ to specific people in specific places, confirmed the claims of Jesus that He would rise again.

Yesterday, Stephan De Beer reminded us of the Risen Christ as the Prince of Peace who appeared to the confused, fearful, and doubtful disciples to calm their troubled hearts and confirm the good news that He indeed has risen and is with them (Luke 26-36-43). How joyous it is to know that He is with us still, in *our* time of trouble.

ABOUT TODAY’S MESSAGE

In today’s message we will explore another one of Jesus post-resurrection appearances found in Mathew 28:18-20. In this text we encounter the Risen Christ in Galilee (interesting to note that Galilee means wheel or **revolution**). It was here, distanced from the temple and the theological “experts”, and far from the religious superiority of Jerusalem, that Jesus commissioned his disciples to serve as witnesses to the Risen Christ, to all nations, in all times. Now, before we go to Mathew 28 which outlines Jesus sending of his disciples into all the world. It is necessary to first explore Jesus own mission.

PART 1: HIS MISSION

After Jesus was baptised (Luke 3), and after the account of Satan’s failed attempts at tempting Jesus in the wilderness, in Luke 4:18-19 we see Jesus in the synagogue reading out of Isaiah 61: 1-2. After he read the text, he simply stated that this scripture was fulfilled. Meaning that *He* was the Messiah who Isaiah prophesied about. This was a shocking and unexpected claim. Let’s now read the text in which Jesus announced his divine appointment,

“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
Because He has anointed Me
To preach the gospel to the poor;
He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted,
To proclaim liberty to the captives
And recovery of sight to the blind,
To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”. (Luke 4:18-19)

On this profound occasion Jesus reveals:

1. Who commissioned, authorised and empowered Him for service.
2. What was the nature of the work He came into the world to do.

Let's look closer at the WHO and the WHAT.

1. Jesus revealed WHO commissioned, authorised and empowered Him.

- Jesus reveals that He is not self-appointed, or Satan appointed (remember Satan tried to tempt Jesus with power and authority in Luke 3).
- His, is a divine appointment. He is anointed, set apart, distinct, qualified, endowed with authority, ability and agency and commissioned by the Spirit of the Lord for His ministry and mission.

2. Jesus describes WHAT He came into the world to do. Jesus announced that the Spirit of the Lord sent Him to:

- announce release (pardon, forgiveness) to the captives, and, recovery of sight to the blind,
- set free those who are oppressed (downtrodden, bruised, crushed by tragedy),
- proclaim the favourable year of the Lord [the day when salvation and the favour of God abound greatly]." (Amplified version)

PART 2: OUR MISSION

Jesus drew near and said to them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and on earth. Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples: baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, and teach them to obey everything I have commanded you. And I will be with you always, to the end of the age". (Mathew 28:18-20)

Like Jesus' announcement of His Mission in Luke 4:18-19, on the commissioning of the disciples in Mathew 28:18-20 Jesus reveals:

1. Who is commissioning, authorising and empowering them for service.
2. What is the nature of their work in the world.

Let's look closer at the WHO and the WHAT in this instance.

1. Jesus revealed WHO is commissioning, authorising and empowering them for service. The Jesus reveals that it is *He* who is commissioning them, the Risen Lord who was faithful in drinking of the cup of suffering and sacrifice, who was crucified, dead, buried and who has risen from the dead. Now, He has been given all authority in heaven and on earth. They were to have full confidence in the authority given to Him.

2. Jesus revealed WHAT was the nature of their work in the world.

- They were not to remain static; they were to *Go into all the world* –:
 - not just the world they were familiar with, but also the unfamiliar and unknown world,
 - not just the religious world but the world of Government, Business and Civil Society: Human Settlements, Home Affairs, Police, Law, Urban Planning, Education, Economy and Finance etc.
 - not just the sacred places but also the profane or *vile* (as John Wesley put it).
- *Teach all nations* – this is removal of distinction, dividing walls are shattered, there is no more a superior nation that were exclusive recipients of God's Word of Life.
- *Baptise* - Let there be a renouncing of evil and an embracing of the Light.
- *Teach all things the Lord hath instructed* – they were not to invent their own teachings but convey the teachings of Jesus.

WHAT ARE WE DISCOVERING:

- The calling of Jesus was authorized, approved and enabled by the Spirit of the Lord. Our calling is authorized and enabled by the Risen Lord. We are not alone or self-authorized. He is with us. Those who witness to the Risen Lord by replicating His presence and service in a fearful, distressed world are empowered by the Omnipotent One – (“All power is given to Me in heaven and on earth.”)
- I don’t know about you, but I need the Omnipotent One in these days. The feeling of powerlessness pervades the current situation we find ourselves in. As site managers and those involved in the context of our support to homeless persons during the Covid lockdown, we need to know something of the divine power which He is prepared to give to us. After all, His power is made perfect in [our] weakness. Therefore [we] will boast all the more gladly of [our] weaknesses, so that the power of Christ may rest upon [us] (2 Corinthians 12:9). As the daily tally of global and national infections and deaths are broadcast all day, for weeks on end, our sense of powerlessness is displaced by the power of the Risen Christ. *In Him we live and move and have our being* (Acts 17:28). Site managers, I praise God for the power of God at work within you.
- Jesus commissioned His disciples to Go into all the world. Don’t get stuck in our comfort zones, places of familiarity, sections of the city, seminaries or church buildings - Go into all the world. Go into the highways, byways and alleyways, go into the boardrooms of business and the chambers of law, go into the house of parliament, go into the senates of universities, go into the streets with no names and the streets with low names. Go. If this crisis has taught us anything, it has taught the people of faith to Go. I hope we continue to Go even after lockdown.
- Teach all nations. The good news is for all people despite culture, ethnicity or nationality. As we follow the disciples’ journeys in the New Testament, we realise that the commission to teach, inadvertently meant that they were also going to learn about the worldview of the nations they encountered. Teaching is always accompanied by learning.
- The commission to the disciples was to teach nations the way of Jesus. An alternate way. A just way. The way of Life and of Love. They were not to uplift self, empire, dogma or money, they were, as we are, to make disciples. If Christ preached the gospel to the poor; healed the broken-hearted, proclaimed liberty to the captives, and recovery of sight to the blind, set at liberty those who are oppressed; and proclaimed the acceptable year of the Lord”, then dear site managers we have the details of our calling in the world.
- As the Father sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us in the world (John 20:21). Love was the beginning of the Mission. John 3:16 is proof of that statement. "God so loved the world that he gave His only begotten Son ... " From this scripture it is clear that Mission is founded and motivated by the Love of the Father. This kind of Love is costly. It is the kind of Love that you demonstrate in your service to those who are under your care. May the Risen Christ appear to you, may you know Him when he appears. May He encourage, empower and enable you as you partake in the Mission of the God.

PRAYER

*“The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me,
 Because He has anointed Me
 To preach the gospel to the poor;
 He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted,
 To proclaim liberty to the captives
 And recovery of sight to the blind,
 To set at liberty those who are oppressed;
 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”.*

Spirit of the Lord fall afresh on me. Amen.