



Sermon Notes: Cameron Webber 29 October 2023

Mission: Who, How, Why, What, When, Where? Acts 11-13

Pre-Amble

Today we are between two series and so we have a stand-alone sermon which is titled **Mission: Who, How, Why, What, When, Where?** There is a Bible study with the same theme available on the website.

The theme of mission has been chosen because this weekend is the **West Wyalong Mission**.

And so we ask...

Who?

- About 16 people from Kiama Anglican Churches

How?

- Partnering with a the Klouths and the church they serve with.

Why?

- To encourage the church and reach into the community with the good news.

What?

- Various Activities – Prime Time, Breakfast, Kids activities in the park, Sunday Church, BBQ...

When?

- This weekend.

Where?

- West Wyalong
 - Is it the centre of the universe or the middle of nowhere?
 - We have the double link now with West Wyalong
 - Klouths (BCA) / Anglican Church
 - Through Us / Community Church

All of which prompts us to ask the same questions of ourselves... **Mission: Who, How, Why, What, When, Where?**

And to help us with that, we are going to look at the mission to Antioch and from Antioch.

Reading Acts 11:19-26 & 12:25 - 13:3

Prayer

Introduction

Mission: Who, How, Why, What, When, Where?

These are the questions we are going to ask but not that in the order.

1. WHAT is Mission?

And so we start by asking, 'What is Mission?'

It was John Stott who said, 'Mission is everything God sends his redeemed people into the world to do.'

Pretty big definition, and no doubt we will get to some of the breadth of that in the coming weeks in the series, 'God's justice in a hurting world.' But as I noted in the Insight section in the bulletin, always at the core of what God sends us into the world to do, is the proclamation of the gospel, the announcement of the Good News... 'that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them. This is the message of reconciliation that has been committed to us.' (2 Corinthians 5:19)

2. WHY do Mission?

So why announce that good news, **why do mission?** We follow the command of Jesus in the 'Great Commission' to 'go and make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19); we heed his instruction (Acts 1:8b) to be his witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.

3. WHO does Mission?

So **who does Mission?** In the context of the book of Acts it's easy to focus on the so-called Missionary Journeys of Paul. And we certainly heard of the Mission of Paul (still Saul at this time) in Acts 11, together with Barnabas, coming from Jerusalem and Tarsus and by the end of chapter 11 (just past what we read) they are off on a humanitarian mission to Judea and then as we read in Acts 13:2-3 'While [the church in Antioch was] worshipping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." So after they had fasted and prayed, they placed their hands on them and sent them off.'

And thus begins what we traditionally call Paul's first missionary journey which is summarised in Acts 13 & 14. Mission - being done by the 'big names' - the important people, specially set apart, commissioned and prayed for. And Paul and Barnabas and Silas and other key figures (Peter, Philip, and so on) play a critical role in the Mission reported in Acts.

But in the Mission of witnessing to Jesus, (Acts 1:8) 'in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth,' the move beyond Jerusalem is begun by a bunch of unnamed, 'ordinary', disciples who are simply obeying the Lord Jesus, and as they go, they tell the good news.

After the martyrdom of Stephen we read (Acts 8:1, 4) 'On that day a great persecution broke out against the church in Jerusalem, and all except the apostles were scattered throughout Judea and Samaria. ... Those who had been scattered, preached the word (*literally*: shared the good news) wherever they went.'

Some big events, momentous events, occur in chapter 9, 10 and into 11, but in what we read in chapter 11 we are reminded of that scattering of chapter 8 and that spread of the gospel that began with the great persecution...

Acts 11:19-20 'Now those who had been scattered by the persecution that broke out when Stephen was killed travelled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch, spreading the word only among Jews. Some of them, however, men from Cyprus and Cyrene, went to Antioch and began to speak to Greeks also, telling them the good news about the Lord Jesus.'

Let's not miss what's happening here in chapter 11 - the mission beyond Jerusalem, and now beyond Judea and Samaria, the beginning of the mission to the ends of the earth, is not the big

names, but the no names. And notwithstanding the importance of the conversion of Cornelius in Acts 10, the beginning of the mission to Gentiles is again ordinary, unnamed disciples telling the good news about Jesus.

The danger is, we easily think of preaching the gospel as a task for the spiritually gifted evangelist or the church minister. And, yes God gives that gift, that task especially to some but we are all called to be witnesses, to share good news. We have Good News and Good News is for Sharing. Every one of us who has received the good news should share it.

4. WHAT, WHEN, WHERE?

So **what** do we do, **when** do we do it, **where** do we do it?

At the simplest level, what we do is 'tell good-news'. The NIV gets it right in Acts 11:20 - 'telling them the good news', but in so many places in our translations (e.g. Acts 8:1, Galatians 1, 1 Corinthians 15) that same word is translated as 'preached the gospel' or some such. In Galatians 1 when Paul (in the NIV translation) speaks of 'the Gospel I preached' it more literally says, 'the good news I good-newsed.'

Let's not over complicate it. What we do is tell good news.... The good news about Jesus and all he has done in his death in our place - paying the price for our sin, in taking the punishment we deserve so we can be saved, redeemed and reconciled to a right relationship with God our creator, simply by trusting in Him; The good news of the sure and certain hope of our resurrection to eternal life as we place our faith in the one who is not only our crucified Saviour, but also our resurrected and ascended Lord who will come again.

As our reading from Isaiah 52 said...

How beautiful on the mountains
are the feet of those who bring good news,
who proclaim peace,
who bring good tidings,
who proclaim salvation,
who say to Zion,
'Your God reigns!' ...
... and all the ends of the earth will see
the salvation of our God. (Isaiah 52:7, 10b)
As we what? As we bring good news.

And what else? For those who have responded to the Good News, this same mission now 'encouraged them all' in that same Good News.

This first mission to the 'ends of the earth', the first real 'mission' to Gentiles is undertaken by people whose names we don't even know, who simply told good news. And they just did that as they went... whenever and wherever.

So when and where can we do that? This weekend we as a church are doing that in partnership with the West Wyalong Anglican Church – both to encourage them and to reach out with them with good news into the community.

Have a look at what's on here in the bulletin and on the flyers.

- Play Group / WOT? / Men's Secret Business
- RE/CC

- Faith Runs Deep
- Prime Time
- KBECET + SRE
- Christmas Carnival

All opportunities to connect with people, in the church and beyond,

One thing that is often important in sharing the good news is a relationship (of some sort) with those we share the good news with. That is certainly true in West Wyalong and rural communities in particular, but I think it is true everywhere, including Kiama. So it is important that we don't just have friends in the church family, but also beyond. It's good to have involvement in a community group or a sports club or connection through common interests.

In terms of 'where', we are mindful at this time of Adam & Avril in the final stages of preparation to go to Madagascar. And whilst that is a big and particular call, never assume God won't call you to something beyond your comfort zone. (Actually, sharing Jesus is nearly always beyond our comfort zone!) Where is God calling you to share the good news of Jesus?

5. HOW can we do Mission?

But **how** can we actually do all that? Lest we think it is our efforts, our gospel outline, our clever speech, or our art of persuasion, that sees the Good News spread, we see here clearly that it is God's grace.

Yes, we are used by God and we need to do that well, but what did we read? Acts 11:21: The Lord's hand was with them, and when Barnabas is sent from Jerusalem he doesn't see a clever program or a fine speaker. No. Acts 11:23 – 'When he arrived [he] saw what the grace of God had done.'

God's grace working in the minds and hearts of Jews and Gentiles in Antioch that they would respond in repentance and faith to the message of the Good news of all that Jesus has done. And it is all done in the power of the Holy Spirit (see Acts 1:8) and with guidance of the Holy Spirit (Acts 13:2). So we must be praying, because this is God's work.

6. WHAT are the results of Mission?

So what are the results of mission?

6a. Growth in Numbers 11:21, 24

11:21 'The Lord's hand was with them, and a great number of people believed and turned to the Lord.'

And then when Barnabas arrives, 11:24, 'a great number of people were brought to the Lord.' And there is great rejoicing in heaven when just one sinner repents!!

6b. Growth in Discipleship 11:23-24, 25-26

But that's only the first step in Making Disciples. As we see in Matthew 28 – the Great Commission – it's a two-step process: Make Disciples - baptising them. Without getting into a big discussion on baptism, we simply note that it is the symbol of the start of the discipleship journey. We might say, Make Disciples – as they turn to the Lord in repentance and faith. Then the second part is: Make Disciples - teaching them to obey.

And that's what happens in Antioch. Growth - not only in numbers, but growth in discipleship, growth in the knowledge and love of God, growth in learning obedience. 11:23 'When

[Barnabas] arrived ... he encouraged them all to remain true to the Lord with all their hearts.' He encouraged them to remain true - to persevere and to be whole-hearted, fair dinkum, authentic, real. And that too, is part of our mission.

11:25-26 'Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he found him, he brought him to Antioch. So for a whole year Barnabas and Saul met with the church and taught great numbers of people.'

What did they teach them - Theology 101? We aren't given the details, no doubt the facts of the gospel were taught and more than that I suspect that that Barnabas and Saul did what Christ commanded, 'Make disciples .. teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you.'

Clearly the learning in the church at Antioch resulted in change and action in the lives of the people there and the result is 'The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch.' (11:26b). Previously called in Acts: they have been called: disciples (6:1), saints (9:13), brothers, believers, those being saved, people of the Way, and now in Antioch - they are called Christians.

Why were they called Christians? It was name probably given to them by those outside the group because they were different. Everyone knew they followed Christ because they kept talking about him, because their lives were changed and being transformed. They were "Christ-ones".

Conclusion

That was the Church in Antioch. What about the Church in Kiama?

Are we ready to share good news? Are we praying for God's grace in the church/churches, and in the town, that we may see the same result that they saw in Antioch? Are we praying for Adam & Avril, for the Klouths and West Wyalong, for our other mission partners, and for ourselves?

Are we growing in discipleship, in our knowledge of and love for the Lord Jesus? Are we becoming more like him, as the Holy Spirit transforms us? Are we known as the Christ-ones, as the Jesus-people?

I reckon a fair bit of that starts with turning up - on Sunday, for mid-week Bible Study, being under the Word, being taught - and learning. A disciple is literally a learner, so if we are disciples of Jesus we need to be learning from him.

This is the ongoing outworking of the commission to make disciples, it is the ongoing fulfilment of Jesus' promise, 'you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses.' (Acts 1:8)

That's why a group of unnamed people could spread the good news to Gentiles, pushing out to the ends of the earth. That's why we can share the good news with our friends, praying that the Lord's hand will be with us, that the power of his Spirit will enable us to bear witness, and that we will a great number of people believe, and turn to the Lord.

And so we pray for the deepening of the Good News in our lives and for the spread of the good news in this place and to the ends of the earth. Amen

Prayer