

Partnering Together on Mission (The Good News Series Part 4)

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[0 : 00] What is up, One Harbor? How are you? Good? I love this. Everybody's like really excited and into it today. I'm digging this, man. Great vibe. If you are new, again, so happy you're here with us this morning. Trust you've been enjoying your time. Any of those who aren't here this morning that are going to be listening to what I'm saying online later on in the week, so happy that you're able to stay up with us and King and all that. Can't wait to have you back here with us. So we are at the end of our value series, kind of kicked off the new year by saying, hey, what is most important?

When we look at the gospel, what is the gospel telling us who we need to be in order to follow Jesus and going on about fulfilling his mission to make disciples? And we have our mission statement, make disciples push back darkness. And that's what we see when we hear this call to follow Jesus. That's how it's worked out. That's how it's lived out. And it's helpful. It's been helpful for us, right?

Even if you're not here and you're a Christian, we hope that you've been helped along the way by us looking at what God is calling us to be and what it looks like to follow Jesus. And today, we're going to look at the final value, and that is partnering together on mission.

What is mission, right? Mission is this really cool buzzword that if you are in the Christian world and are a reader, it's this like really cool thing, which basically is this idea of evangelism.

But evangelism is like an old uncool word. We're going to change it. We're going to be hip and cool. We're going to call it mission these days. And that's all right. Let's go for it. And that's just fulfilling Jesus's command to go everywhere and make new disciples, make and mature disciples.

[1 : 38] That is the mission Jesus gave us. And if you think about what we do as churches and the busyness and the activities we're on about, you might think we consider mission as trying to keep the saved saved, right? Trying to keep the saved entertained and just keep coming back to church to fill the seats.

And the danger is, is that we get fixated. And when we go that way, we get fixated on all church activities and church stuff and what's happening inside the church. And we can start ignoring and stop thinking about what's happening outside the church. And man, when our world gets that small, when we get so myopic and thinking about the only thing that's a big deal and that Jesus cares about, what's going on here, we start to care about and we kind of devolve into the wrong things. We begin to argue and quarrel over stupid things, right? People get mad and they leave the churches because they didn't like the color of the carpet or the color of walls that were painted or the music styles or this or that and the other thing, any of those things. And thankfully, you know, us as One Harbor Church, we're not there and I hope we never get there, but we have to be on guard because we can't be so arrogant. We think that we'll never slip into that, right? But maybe that's not our danger right now, but I want to draw our attention to one danger that could sidetrack us from the mission. And it's, you know, this thing about it to say, it's something that I'm thankful for.

And if you're around me, you'll know that about me. And it's often this thing that we hear even from people that are coming in and in our services for the first time, they'll come up to us and say, man, I just love being here. There's a uniqueness. There's something to, there's like God's presence is really here. And it's amazing and it feels alive and I just love that. And man, I hope that never changes. I hope that, man, when we come on a Sunday, we're not here to check a box, but we really experience and encounter the living God every single time. But that can't be what we reduce Christianity to. It's tempting to retreat into holy huddles and chasing God encounters.

And so what I want to look at today is the story, looking at Jesus's life, this amazing story in Matthew 17. We're going to start in verse one. It says this, after six days, Jesus took with him Peter, James, and John, his brother, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. And he was transfigured before them and his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light. And behold, there appeared to them Moses and Elijah talking with him. If you don't know who Moses and Elijah is, that's like the pantheon of greatness. Like Peter, James, and John would have been like, whoa, like these are the superstars of their faith. So there's this amazing moment. And I bet you, Peter, James, and John in that moment were probably pinching themselves. I mean, I can't believe that we got called to be a part of this, right? And the other nine disciples down there, they're going to be so jealous when we come down and tell them what we experienced and what happened. And for many of us, I hope these are moments that we desire. Many of us who are Jesus followers in the room, I hope this is something that we want. We want to experience and see Jesus revealed in his glory this way. Because there are moments, frankly, that we need. And for good reason, when we experience Jesus, it's amazing. When we see him glorified, when we, God comes and he exalts

Jesus to us and we see him for who he really is, it's a game changer in our lives. It grows our faith, it builds our faith, it strengthens our faith. Seeing Jesus is something we should pursue and desire.

[5 : 19] But man, that thing, it can easily, that good thing can easily become the only thing that we're about in our Christianity. In verse four, that's what Peter does. Peter says to Jesus, Lord, it is good that we are here. If you wish, I will make three tents here, one for you and one for Moses and one for Elijah. Peter, man, what a pure heart this guy had, right? This pure disciple, he just loved Jesus. He saw and he said, man, this is amazing. You know what? Let's stay in this place. Let's like make this thing prolonged. It's kind of like what we do as Christians, right? We run from conference to conference, pursuing encounters with God, pursuing these amazing moments. Or maybe it's just worship concerts that we're going after. We can't imagine in those moments it getting any better than this.

This is like the apex of Christianity and what we can experience. Let's make this last as long as possible. And again, like what I said, you have Jesus and Moses and Elijah there and Peter's thinking like, oh my goodness, these are like the hall of famers. These are like the superstars. If there was like a Christian fantasy league, these would be the top draft picks, right? And he had all of them right there, right in front of him. So Peter says, man, let's keep this thing going. I'll tell you what, I'll make it so good. I'll build each of you a tent. You won't even have to share a room.

And I bet you he was just about to offer them free room service as well before God interrupts him, right? And if I didn't know the rest of the story, my best guess would be that God was about to tell Peter, hey, great response, buddy. Your desire and your heart is so good and so well. But he doesn't do that. He also doesn't rebuke Peter. What he does is he redirects him. Verse 5, it says this, he, Peter, was still speaking, right? Peter was good at that, like talking, rambling on too much.

We don't know anyone like that, right? He was still speaking when behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them. And a voice from the cloud said, this is my beloved son with whom I am well pleased. Listen to him. When the disciples heard this, they fell on their faces and were terrified. But Jesus came and touched them saying, rise and have no fear. And when they lifted their eyes, they saw no one but Jesus only. So what does God do? How does God bring this mountaintop experience to an end? He redirects their hearts. Guys, it's important to see Jesus, right? It's important for us to do that. But God wants more than that from us. That's what we're seeing here. God says, he interrupts Peter and he says, hey, great thought there, Peter, but I want you to look and see Jesus and know who he is, but listen and obey him. It's not just about seeing Jesus. It's about knowing who he is, but in response and listening to him and obeying him, following him. So many of the stories that have come out of recent revivals since the 80s, man, you hear about these amazing moments that people are experiencing

God and there's crazy manifestations. But you know what? You also hear like these crazy things of people just like not repenting of sin, just choosing to live in unrepentant sin. It's like, man, how can you go? How can you see God and experience for who he is and then just go keep on having an affair?

[8 : 45] There's a disconnection there. Something's wrong. They haven't seen, they like Jesus has this like big glory, amazing thing. They love these encounters where they could experience this sensationalism, but man, we don't want to follow. We don't want to obey. We don't want to make the hard decisions that are going to cost us anything. It's this approach to Christianity that it's all about me. God, give me an experience so that I can escape my problem. Give me an experience so it'll just like in that moment fix my problem right away. But following Jesus is more than that. It's more than powerful God encounters.

Following Jesus means following Jesus. What he's on about, what he's doing, where he's going, get behind that, right? As one pastor put it, a Christian life should look like a long obedience in the same direction. Following Jesus, man, it's enjoying him, but it's his long obedience as well.

So what does that mean? Where does Jesus take them? Well, he takes them right back down the mountain. Verse 9, and as they were coming down the mountain, Jesus commanded them, tell no one the vision until the Son of Man is raised from the dead. And the disciples asked, then why do the scribes say that first Elijah must come? And he answered, Elijah does come and he will restore all things, but I tell you, this is what I want to focus in on. I tell you that Elijah has already come and they did not recognize him, but did to him whatever they pleased. So also the Son of Man will certainly suffer at their hands.

Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them of John the Baptist. See, following Jesus doesn't mean we stay in Christian bubbles. It doesn't mean we create these holy huddles that we never break from. Jesus is telling his disciples that a lot of long obedience is going to involve suffering. Suffering doesn't happen on the mountaintop. Suffering happens when we come down from the mountain as we follow Jesus into the real world. And even being a Christian superstar like Elijah and Moses and Jesus doesn't keep you from suffering. Their ministries, their lives in following God and obedience, that long obedience, it was marked with a lot of difficulties, a lot of hardship, a lot of suffering. This is because they didn't run away from people and live in isolation.

They walked with people who suffered. They moved towards them. They didn't see people as problems. They just recognized that people have problems and they moved towards them. Mission means moving with Jesus toward hurting people. As one pastor, I heard one pastor say, like, how do you do mission? And he says, look for and find out where the ache is. Where is the ache in people's hearts? And then go towards that.

[11 : 52] Verse 14. And they came to the crowd. They came down the mountain. They saw the crowd. Jesus doesn't say, let's get out of here. We just had this amazing experience. I don't want to kill this buzz.

Let's go somewhere else. No, they moved toward the crowd. Jesus said, hey, let's go into the crowd. And immediately what happens, a man came up to him, came up to Jesus and kneeling before him said, Lord, have mercy on my son for he has seizures and he suffers terribly for often he falls into the fire and often into the water. Man, this is why Jesus couldn't stay up the mountain. He knew what was down the mountain. He knew he couldn't allow his disciples to stay up the mountain. There were people down the mountain with real problems that were suffering, that needed him, that could only be helped by him. And they came right to the crowd. Why did they go there? Because that's where God does his work.

Following Jesus isn't about like becoming a monk in a monastery, having all the time to yourself, by yourself, or it's just you and God. Man, it's with people. It's in the crowd.

He's in the business of saving and healing, hurting people, right? What did he say? He's like, man, that the healthy don't need a physician, right? It's the sick. And I came to seek and save the lost.

Disciples in the same way, we're not meant to keep Jesus all to ourselves. Man, we want others to see Jesus too. We want others to know him and be changed by him and healed by him. And so we move toward people knowing that Jesus is with us. And how do we know he is with us? Because he promised he would be with us and he accomplished that. When he ascended to heaven, he sent us the gift of the Holy Spirit.

[14 : 00] His Holy Spirit, his very presence with us. Luke 24, 49. Jesus is about to go back to the Father. He had just been raised from the dead, been with the disciples, and he's ascending to heaven. And just before he says this, behold, listen up, listen up, guys. Behold, I'm sending the promise of my Father upon you. He's talking about the Holy Spirit there. But stay in the city until you, until you are clothed with power from on high. Jesus commands his disciples. He tells them, there's a great mission.

There's a big mission. There's people to go out and proclaim the gospel to. There's people that I'm going to be saving. There's people's lives I'm going to be transforming and healing and all this amazing stuff. But you can't run out and do that. You got to wait. You got to wait until you are clothed with power, with the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God. He is the essence of God. He is God Almighty himself. He is sovereign. He is everything that God is. And it's important for us to realize this because only God has the power to save and to make hurting people whole. Which means when we realize this, we don't try to go and do this in our own strength, right? Mission requires Jesus's authority and power. In verse 16, after the man comes and he says, man, heal my son, he says this, oh, guess what, Jesus? I brought my son to your disciples and they could not heal him.

Guys, if I had a nickel for every time, that was true of my pastoring, right? Someone coming to me, this pastor, I need help, struggling with some type of addiction, right? And I try and I try and I just can't heal them. I can't fix them. Couples with broken marriages coming to me, man, we need help. We need this fixed. I can't do it. I, Jesse, can't fix your problems.

And counselors, their times are filled with people coming because we look and we say, we need the guru. We need the pro to help us fix our situation. But guys, without the Holy Spirit's power, without the power of God to do any change and real transformation, the best that we can do is teach you how to cope. That's it. We can't change it. But that's not what God's interested in. Real change, real healing, real transformation, only God can do that. And so we don't bring people to tell them our amazing wisdom and these tips and tricks of how to have a better life and good life hacks to fix your problem. No, we bring people to Jesus. We point them to Jesus, who's our only hope in transforming and changing and fixing. We need the Holy Spirit's power. Verse 17, Jesus answered this man, this hopeless man, and says, oh, faithless and twisted generation, how long am I to be with you?

How long am I to bear with you? And he says, bring him here to me. Bring your boy here to me. And Jesus, he rebuked the demon, and it came out of him. And the boy was healed instantly. You know, sometimes we experience that, and it's really cool. We pray, and then God intervenes, and we see this instantaneous, almost miraculous thing where it was like, boom, black and white, change. I remember growing up, and there was a guy who had this testimony. He was a drug addict, and he had struggled with drugs, and he gave his life to Jesus. This was like in the Jesus People Movement days. He was a hippie, and so he was coming out of that lifestyle, and he just had a hard time quitting drugs. Then he got baptized, and he said, Jesse, I can tell you, when I came up and out of that water, I did not have a desire and a taste for drugs anymore after that. I cannot tell you why, but that can only be something that God can do. And I would agree, that can only be something God can do. Man, I wish, I wish I had this ability for you to come to me and say, pray for me, and I pray for you, and then boom, your problem's fixed, right? Sometimes, the very rare occasion, that does happen. But you know what? Most often, it takes some fighting. It takes some longer obedience on my part, and perseverance on your part. We're together. We're fighting this thing. We're persevering in this. We're trusting in God.

[18 : 30] We're going to him, and keep going to him, and keep going to him. And that doesn't sound like fun, right? That sounds really tiring. So what do we do, man? It's like, well, we don't like that. We don't like this idea of, like, we have to really persevere, and endure, and push through, and fight this battle that we're fighting, and trust in God, and keep trusting in God, and wait for him to act, and wait for him to act. We wonder what it's going to act. Man, why can't it just happen quickly?

So we look for the shortcuts. How do we do that? Man, it's various ways, right? We try to figure out, man, what worked before? Let's just repeat that, you know? When I prayed for that guy, where did I lay my hand on his shoulder? How was I speaking? What was, like, the phrase I was using?

Maybe there was some, like, nice background music in Eden Minor that was setting the mood, and the lighting was down, you know? So we just try to recreate these things, and be like, maybe that's how we get God to work, but that's not how it works. That's not how mission is accomplished.

Like I said, mission isn't accomplished in Jesus's authority and power, and we need to listen and follow Jesus's wisdom for the mission. Jesus tells his disciples this. They came to Jesus privately, right? Probably with their tail between their legs, and said to him, hey, how come we couldn't cast him out? What was going on there? And he said to them, actually, it's because of your little faith. Now, if you look at the mark account of this same passage, Jesus says, actually, it's because this only comes out through prayer and fasting. So Jesus here isn't saying that just having big faith is going to solve your problems. If you have big enough faith, you'll kind of be able to walk around and zap the demons and start snapping your fingers like Mary Poppins, and everything gets tidied up nice and clean, right? That's not what he's getting at. Like, we have this idea, it's like, man, and sometimes we're taught this in certain circles in the church. Like, if you have enough faith, it's almost like we treat faith like the force, that you become this master Jedi, and you just be like, fixing the problems. Children acting up. Children stop acting up, you know? It's like, I need a raise. My boss comes in and says like, hey, you're a horrible worker, and you never show up on time, but guess what? We're going to promote you, and we're going to give you 100% raise in your salary. We would love for that to be the case. Man, if that's all it took, it would be so easy, and it would have fixed all our problems, but that's not how it works. And what Jesus isn't saying here, man, if you just had bigger faith, man, you could do anything you want. Actually, the smallness of their faith, Jesus, I think Jesus is pointing it here to, had to do with their lack of tenaciousness, their lack of persevering, their lack of pursuing and listening for what God is, how God was wanting to work in the situation, and how is it going to be accomplished.

They have this small view of what faith does, and sometimes faith means God powerfully intervenes immediately. Sometimes faith helps us to push longer and harder into helping and interceding and being with people and relying and waiting for God to come and intervene, like what's happening in this case, right? He said it will only come out with prayer and fasting. And what's interesting about this, is that this whole episode happened after the time Jesus sent all his disciples out two by two.

[21 : 51] It happened after that. He gives them authority to heal and cast out demons, and they go out, and they're experiencing, hey, they come back and tell Jesus, man, we cast demons out. We were healing people. It was amazing. Success, success, success. And then they come here, and they're just like, what's going on? What's the deal? It's like our batteries ran out. We just couldn't, it wasn't working. The demon wasn't coming out anymore.

Suddenly, what had worked before didn't work this time. They were thinking, man, we got the right formula. Let's just rinse and repeat it, baby, right? And here's the thing, guys. I'm going to be a little cheeky here. Western church, this is how we like to do mission. We do mission with faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy System. So what we do is we like to go around looking for the latest successful program to implement. What worked over there, let's just take that, let's implement, and that's going to fix all our problems. That's going to make mission success.

But what we need to do is we need to get back to faith in the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit. Now, I'm not against systems. God is a God of order. However, if you look at the early church, any systems that came into the church were in response to growth. They were in response to things, right? They didn't implement them to cause growth. And there's a proven approach to mission that is tried and true throughout church history. You see the church's commitment, commitment, to long obedience, to proclaiming and demonstrating the gospel. And you see this commitment and long obedience to prayer and fasting. Little faith, it gives up when God doesn't respond quickly enough. Students of revivals, they say this, throughout church history, there's a common rhythm. Major God movements are commonly preceded by prayer movements.

Prayer, God-adoring, Jesus-exalting, kingdom-desiring prayers, that's what happens. That's what goes on. And God births that in people's hearts, and then they respond to that, and that's how those prayer movements start. And you might say to yourself, you know what, Jess, I hear you, man. And we pray, don't we? We pray as a church. I pray. Isn't that good enough? But I want to challenge us. Often, what we mean is that we pray to God for what he can do for us. One pastor puts it this way, we often pray to God for what's in his hands, and so we miss his face. But when we pray to God to see his face, and he loves to open his hands. Prayer isn't about moving God to our hearts and to our desires.

Prayer is about God moving us to his heart, about hearing what he's on about and what he's doing. And then we say, oh, that's what you're on about. We're going to tuck in behind that, because while you call us to mission, we realize it's your mission, and you're the one leading us into the mission and knowing where we're supposed to be and what we're supposed to do.

[25 : 08] We catch the wisdom of God for his mission and prayer. Instead of always adopting man's wisdom for how to accomplish the mission, we should adopt the habit of going directly to the source in prayer. Prayer is this amazing labor of love that builds our faith. When you go to God, when you experience God in prayer, it's going to build and strengthen your faith. Prayer and fasting, it's this tenacious, sacrificial pursuing of God's power and purpose. Simultaneously, it's an admission of our weakness, and we begin to realize how dependent we are on God to accomplish his mission. Man, how often, guys, I'm going to just confess this. How often I pray for someone.

I pray for someone and just expect it to like, that's going to solve the problem. I don't pray for them again. I like this idea of one and done. It's super convenient. Man, but for the sake of the mission, for the sake of seeing God's power and authority working through us, we have to be committed to persevere in these things. These are good things that we could be persevering in.

And if we don't, we're going to end up putting our hope in systems and programs instead of being led by the Holy Spirit and looking to him for his wisdom and his power and his authority that really accomplishes the mission. Guys, I want to encourage this. Man, let's be led by the Holy Spirit.

And doing that, God doesn't promise that if we do that, we get it right, that all of a sudden, mission's going to be easy. We're going to land in this. Mission is going to be hard, but all things are possible with God. The last part of verse 20, Jesus says this, For truly I say to you, disciples, listen, this is true. If you have faith like the grain of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, move from here to there and it will move and nothing will be impossible for you. When we're on mission, when we commit to that, we're going to run into mountains.

When we're out there pushing back darkness, we're going to run into mountains. Sometimes we'll see God move those mountains. Sometimes that'll be immediately. Sometimes it'll be slowly. Sometimes we have to wait and wait and wait and then God does it. And then sometimes God doesn't move the mountain at all. Maybe that mountain gets moved in the generation behind us. We don't know. We don't get to be God.

[27 : 50] But the point is, is that we always go to God with faith. We always go on mission with faith in who God is and what he is able to do, knowing that he can overcome the impossible. We talked about hope is alive. Man, we are facing in this area, a mountain called addiction. That is a seemingly impossible mountain to move.

And we've been running at it for a while already. Man, it is tough and it is tiring and we're seeing some ground taken and that mountain's shifting a little bit, a little slowly, but it, man, it ain't cast into the sea yet. It's still around. It's still there. But that doesn't mean we give up.

That means we continue to pray and we fight and we persevere because it's worth it. Because we know God can do the impossible. And that's what keeps us from giving up. What keeps us from giving up, man, when we feel tired, when we feel like, man, you know what, this isn't worth it anymore.

We look to the cross and we look to the resurrection because that is where we see God doing and accomplishing the impossible. You know what's hard? Dying on a cross. You know what's hard? Taking the full wrath of God for other people's sins in their place like Jesus did. No one's ever had to do that.

That is impossible. It's the hardest thing that has ever been done. But it was through that that he defeated the impossible mountains of sin and death by dying and resurrecting again. If I could have the band come up, this is how we respond. Let's think about this. I want to invite you, if you're here and you've been facing the hopelessness of your sin. You know you're a sinner. You know something's wrong. You're living life without hope. It's a mountain, whatever you're facing that you can't move or you can't climb and you've tried and you've tried and you've tried. Here's the good news.

[30 : 02] Jesus did it for you. That sin that you're trying to get out from under, that hopelessness that you're trying to get out from under, Jesus did it for you.

Trust in him. I want to hold out to you where your hope is. Jesus says, come to me. Faith in Jesus as your savior who died for your sins, who forgive your sins. Faith in him as Lord, as a king to follow, that long obedience, it is so worth it. Faith in his death and resurrection, that's the good news that sets us free from sin and death.

Maybe you're here and you say, yeah, I'm a Jesus follower, but man, you know what? I've experienced some serious mission fatigue. I'm tired. I want to tap out. I want to stop caring for the broken.

And the hurting. I'm starting to see people as problems instead of seeing that people have problems that Jesus wants to help. I just want to retreat into a holy huddle, make a Christian bubble.

We could be nice and safe. And I just call you to lean on Jesus in this moment, man, cry out to him, Lord, help me where I've been trying to do this in my own strength. Help me, encourage me, strengthen me.

[31 : 24] And we do mission together. We don't do mission by ourselves. We do mission by following Jesus, right? We're led by the Holy Spirit. We're guided by the Holy Spirit.

He goes with us and we move into the lives of hurting people. And just think about this, guys. In Romans, Paul says this, the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in every single person who is a Christian.

We don't come with some tepid, weak power. There's the same power that raised Jesus from the dead is at work in us.

We go with that. The power that moved the impossible mountains for us is at work in us, goes with us everywhere we go.

Paul says in Corinthians, you are the aroma of Christ. People get around you and they start smelling something different.

[32 : 31] I know where your minds are going right now. It's a good aroma, okay? We carry the aroma with Christ with us. People, they're like, something's different about you. Something's pleasant. Something's, man, what is that?

All things are possible with God, guys. All things are possible with God. March 6th, it's coming up in a few weeks. This church is going to fast and pray together.

We're going to do it as a corporate united body. Put it on your calendars. We're going to show up. We're going to pray here. We're going to pray for the mountains in our city.

We're going to pray for the mountains in our lives and in the lives of our neighbors and the people we know that are hurting and need Jesus. March 6th, 6 p.m. and mark it.

Now we're going to respond with communion. And if you're a believer in Jesus, this is kind of like we always love the land here because, man, we always want to end pointing to Jesus and reminding ourselves about Jesus.

[33 : 45] We believe in this Lord and Savior. His body broken to heal our brokenness. His blood shed for the forgiveness of our sins. And in this moment, let's stop and let's give thanks.

Let's give thanks that Jesus removed those mountains that we couldn't move. He overcame what we couldn't overcome. And let that truth nourish your faith. Right?

Nourish your faith in God who's able to do the impossible and continues to do so. Pray with me. Lord, we're going to take some moments here to think about what this means.

That you are the God of the impossible. That you are the God who goes before us, who fights our battles. That you are the God who has an amazing mission to save, seek and save us.

Lord, we thank you that you love us so much that you came to die for our sins. And you rose again to conquer sin and death. And you did that for us, Lord. Help us to be filled with thanks.

[34 : 49] But as we remember you, that it wouldn't encourage us to retreat into holy huddles. But it would encourage us with boldness to go out and proclaim your name boldly. Amen.

Amen. Amen.