THE MANNER OF MISSION: GREAT COMMISSION 2

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Category: Mission

As Christians, we can get very hung up on activities; on doing stuff. There are literally hundreds of plans for world evangelisation and strategies to reach all of the nations for Christ. Don't get me wrong, I'm not saying that doing stuff and making plans is wrong, but the way in which we do things can often be far more important than the actual thing we do. You can sweep a floor to the glory of God and you can preach a sermon to your own glorification: it all depends on your attitude.

This is why,Â believe that John 20:21 needs to be taken as the key text for mission at our point in history.

> *As the Father has sent me, so I am sending you. (NLT)*

This verse doesn't tell us what Jesus is sending us to do (make disciples, bear witness to him), but it does tell us how he is sending us. He is sending us in the same way that the Father sent him. Obviously, there is far more in this simple phrase than can be covered in a short blog post, but I'd like to highlight three (related) ways in which the Father sent Jesus and in which Jesus sends us.

Humility: the Son of God, who was intimately involved in every aspect of creation, came to earth as baby and was laid in a manger. He lived the life of a wandering teacher without wealth or status and was eventually executed as a common criminal. He befriended outcasts and the marginalised and was routinely shunned by people in authority and influence. Even in his teaching he did not push his own agenda, but spoke the words given to him by his Father.

And this is how Jesus sends us out into the world: as humble servants, not as rulers and conquerors. We are not sent to build Empires or to extend the reach of our denominations or our personal projects - we are sent to serve and to proclaim the Good News of Jesus. It is a sad fact that the message of Jesus has been distorted around the globe because missionaries have tended to come from the rich and powerful Western nations. This means that the message of the humble, suffering servant has come tied up with the trappings of economic and political power. We need to find ways to decouple the Gospel of Jesus from the cultural baggage that so often comes attached to it and we need to learn to be servants as Jesus was.

Sacrifice: Jesus was sent to give himself for us. The whole of his life, culminating in his appalling death, was a demonstration of his love and sacrifice for us. He did not retain the comfort, the majesty, the position or ultimately the life which was rightly his: he gave them all up freely for us.

Mission is a call to sacrifice ourselves for Jesus. It involves giving up comfort, status, time, money - everything. Whether we are called as church-planting missionaries to Timbuctoo or as school teachers in Tottenham, God calls us to lay our lives on the line for him. There are times of great joy as we follow God which make all the sacrifices worthwhile. But there are times when it is hard, tough and seems to lead nowhere - but our call is to stick with it and to continue to follow.

Triumph: Jesus came in triumph, but it was a strange upside down sort of triumph. His cry on the cross "it is finished" John 19:30 had an element of triumph and victory - the sense of a difficult job accomplished against all the odds.

There is a triumph in mission too, but it isn't found in the spectacular pronouncements of the TV preachers or the building of ecclesiastic or mission empires. Mission triumph is found in Henry Martyn burning out for God in Central Asia bringing the Scriptures to Muslim peoples. Christian triumph is seen in the quiet life of Liang, a Chinese believer who helped plant a Church among the Li people on the Chinese island of Hunan, despite the fact that the Li had martyred her husband just a few weeks earlier. Jesus sends us out in the same way that he was sent out and victory is only won at a price.