IT'S NOT ABOUT GOING; IT'S ABOUT BEING SENT: GREAT COMMISSION 13

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Categories: Bible & Mission, Mission, Observations

This is almost certainly the last post in my series on the "Great Commission". I hope that this little romp through a couple of familiar passages has been interesting and even thought provoking.

In a comment on an earlier post in this series Simon wrote:

> *I donâ€™t think that, if you take the â€œgoingâ€ out of it, you can still call it â€œmissionâ€ .*

I realise that I should do as "Simon says" (sorry, couldn't resist that) but, actually, I don't agree with him. If you read the earlier post (number 9 in the series) you will see that I don't believe that 'Going' is a neccesary part of mission. In fact, I would argue that the whole notion of 'going' has caused us to have a rather confused idea of what constititues mission. I took a sideways look at this question back in 2007.

However, while I don't think that geopgraphical dislocation is an essential componant of mission (after all, the disciples were called to be witnesses in Jerusalem as well as to the ends of the earth), I do believe that it is important to acknowledge that we are *sent* with a purpose. The *Great Commission* in Matthew 28 and Luke 1 has Jesus sending out his disciples into the world to do something and (as Simon mentions in his comment) Jesus sends us out in the same way that the Father sent him (John 20:21). There must be something intentional and purposeful about our engagement with the world. It is not enough just to 'be Christians' in the world, we have to demonstrate the reality of the Kingdom through our actions and in our words - we have to act on our call to mission.

Francis of Assisi is reported to have said "preach the Gospel: use words if neccesary" (though he would have said it in Latin, if indeed he did say it). Whether Francis said it or not, there is some wisdom in the saying. Some people are far too quick to push their faith on others, without a corresponding ethical, kingdom lifestyle. Our words are given truth and power by our actions. However, actions are never enough. As we meet and get to know people there will need to be a time when we explain the message of the Gospel to them. We can't avoid words entirely and we must be prepared to explain what it is that Christ has done in our lives. Our words should be gentle, appropriate and persuasive; there is no place for "ramming our religion down other peoples' throats". But Jesus has sent us into the world to bear witness to him and we have to tell this world the story of his incarnation, life, death and ressurection.

Down through the centuries the Christian faith has had its fair share of heroes and heroines, but for the most part, the Kingdom has spread as everyday Christians - not famous saints or great missionaries - have shared the Good News with their friends and families. It is for this that we are sent!

Ed Stetzer has written an excellent series on what this could look like in the life of a Church. You can

find links here.