

**SERMON TITLE-** "The Mission"

**TEXT-** Matthew 10:1-10

**PREACHED AT-** Neighbourhood Church

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“The mission, should you chose to accept it is . . .”

You have just watched a clip from the movie “Misison Impossible 2” and today I hope it sticks with you because there is a great deal in that clip that reflects a key Kingdom concept. There is a mission and it is a mission that we must choose to accept.

The English language - has an amazing capacity for inventing new words. In many cases it seems rather superficial and is basically slang becoming accepted.

But occasionally a word is invented that really does reflect an insight. That is the case with the word is, “missional.”

A few years back I started hearing this word and at first I was just annoyed with it but in the years that have rolled by I am starting to like the word more and more.

We are to be people driven by our mission- we must be a “missional” church.

This is our 2nd week back in our own building and we still are living with the incompleteness of it all. As we reflected on that last week, I mentioned that one of the things that keeps us from getting discouraged by all the chaos, dirt and hard work that the renovation entails is that we have undertaken it for a purpose. We did not undertake this just because it seemed like a cool idea- we undertook it because there was a need. That need relates directly to our mission.

Some years ago we sat down as a church and thought out and then wrote out what our mission is. The statement we came up with is-

**“To build committed followers of Jesus,  
to do His work in our city, country and world.”**

In the weeks ahead we are going to look at this statement, phrase by phrase. Hopefully this reminds us, once we are finished with the building, what the purpose of it all is. I hope that this carries on long past the building process

But today, I want to firmly establish the Kingdom fact- in our minds- that we are a missional church- a missional church that needs to accept its mission.

There is, of course, no doubt that Jesus came to earth on a mission. Jesus did not come to earth on a sightseeing tour. Jesus was sent to earth by His Father.

**This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. 1 John 4:9**

So today we are going to look at what “missional” means and the story we are going to look at comes from the days while Jesus was at the height of His time with His disciples and while they were specifically in “training” mode.

**He called his twelve disciples to him and gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.**

**These are the names of the twelve apostles: first, Simon (who is called Peter) and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.**

**These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions . . . Matthew 10:1-5**

This is the first missions text in the NT and it sets a distinct pattern. That pattern begins with a list of names.

The movie clip begins with a message- “you have been called to a mission.”

The first thing I would like to note is that the mission begins with a list of names. The Bible is full of lists of names and for many of us they are things to skip over- because they are long and often hard to pronounce. I don’t think that this is a big deal but it is also important to recognize why they are there.

The names in the Bible show that it is about real people choosing to serve or not serve God.

Christianity is a faith that focuses on the individual.

I remember a lecture we had on Islam and this speaker was trying to explain why it was part of practice to pray and worship in large groups, at exactly the same time, and often wearing identical clothes.

His explanation was that it was like buying apples from a bag. If one apple has a flaw it was easier to overlook in a bag full of apples than if it is sitting on a counter alone.

Similarly worshipping as part of a large crowd means that my own imperfections do not stand out so much.

I can’t give any more authority to the explanation of Islam than that I heard this explanation- BUT it is a very good description of how and why we as people sometimes attempt to hide in the crowd. If a crowd is doing something, we can hide more easily.

The Bible challenges this natural human way of thinking and continuously tells stories of God speaking to individuals, and calling them out, and speaking into their lives.

This leads to a very important first step-

### **#1. You Are Named To The Mission**

The Bible is the story of God calling people to missions.

But the call to missions is not about a few rare and unusual people being called to mission- it is about 1000s upon 1000s of people being called. It about whole tribes and nations of people being called.

How does the Bible convey this? By making lists. And so the Bible is full of lists of people who have been called by God.

In the case of the NT too, there are lists of people and their names and identities are spelled out.

The disciples are described, by their families, by their work, and by the people they associate with. Every one of the disciples was a distinct individual. This list makes this very clear.

And what does all this have to do with us?

Every child of God is called to mission- specifically and individually. The Kingdom of God is not about hiding in a crowd hoping that somehow we can fade into the background.

For a movie to attract an audience, it requires that the protagonist be one of the world’s beautiful people- people who strike a pose well.

This of course is not the case in the Kingdom of God. In fact the Kingdom of God is specifically about those whose outward appearance is their big asset.

And likewise in the Kingdom of God, it is not those who are outwardly visible that are important. This is very good news because only a few people are highly visible and very few people are in the spotlight.

But God calls each and everyone of us, individually to a mission and everyone is given a Kingdom assignment that they are responsible for.

With that assignment

## **#2. You Have Been Given Authorization**

This is another way the James Bond and Mission Impossible movies have something that fits well with the Kingdom view of mission. We have been given an assignment that is quite amazing [far more amazing, in fact, than any of the movies could really capture] BUT to fulfill that assignment we will need special tools, abilities and authorizations.

In James Bond stories, he had the license to kill. This was something, presumably that he needed to get the job done. It was, of course, an extraordinary authorization.

We do not have that particular license but we have an extraordinary authority.

Jesus-

**“gave them authority to drive out evil spirits and to heal every disease and sickness.”**

In other places different aspects of authority and rights are explained. If we understand them they are more amazing than anything in James Bond’s fictional tool kit.

On this particular mission, Jesus gave His disciples the same power He had to heal and drive out evil spirits.

Now just like James Bond, each individual mission has its own required tools and the carte blanche power that Jesus gave His disciples did not just carry on. Oh there were times when they healed people but it was extraordinary. These sweeping powers were given for this mission.

But when it comes to evil spirits we have been given a sweeping authority.

One of the places that this is described is in Luke, as the disciples came back from one of their missions trips. Jesus comments-

**I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. I have given you authority to trample on snakes and scorpions and to overcome all the power of the enemy; nothing will harm you. Luke 10:18-19**

That is quite an observation and quite a statement. In the course of history, like so many things, extremists have misused these verses but the promise is sweeping and dramatic.

And what is it? As God’s people we do not have to live in fear of evil spirits in the world.

People have always had a fascination with evil and currently there are a series of shows as people go around the countryside looking for ghosts.

The very thought of it gives me the creeps and the Bible could not be more clear when it instructs God’s people not to fool around with stuff like that. It is evil.

However, Jesus is very clear, as well that while we are not to fool around with spirits or the like- we also have absolutely nothing to fear from these. Using the metaphor

of a world crawling with snakes and scorpions, Jesus indicates that we don't even have to be careful were we step.

In the context of a world which has evil spirits everywhere- we can just go walking wherever we want and not even think about them.

That is quite the power. In a spiritual context we have been given true, bulletproof armour.

For the most part we don't think about this authority- nor should we- but it does illustrate that when someone is called to a specialized mission- they will need specialized tools.

And we have been given these tools.

But Jesus carries on-

**Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel. As you go, preach this message: 'The kingdom of heaven is near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received, freely give. Matthew 10:6-8**

### **#3. You Have Been Given Instructions**

Like the movies, those on a mission are given instructions as to what the mission is. This particular mission was very specific but like all missions had several components and as the 12 were sent out their instructions contained 3 major items-

#### 1. Where to go

They were to go specifically to the Israelite people. They were, on this mission, not to go anywhere else.

#### 2. What to say

They were to say, "The Kingdom of heaven is near." It seems that they did not really know what this meant at the time. In fact we can be quite certain that they did not know what this meant- but they knew exactly what they were to say.

#### 3. What to do

And they were told what to do- they were to exercise the powers that they had been given.

We are a missional people but we have a mission that, while it has parallels to this mission has some other features as well. Our mission statement is-

**Then Jesus came to them and said, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age." Matthew 28:18-20**

And it follows the pattern of Matthew 10

1. Where to go? Everywhere. We are a missional people and that sense of mission has had Kingdom people going to the ends of the earth to bring the message of the Kingdom.

If there is a gap, however, it is that it is often easier to go somewhere else to bring the message of the Kingdom- than it is to take that message to those we rub shoulders with.

Ironically, this is a harder assignment.

2. What do we say? We are to teach what Jesus taught us. This is why actually studying the Bible and especially Jesus' teachings is important.

3. What are we to do? We are to baptize. Baptism is the call to commitment.

There's our mission!

Jesus has another thing to add when He sets out the mission to the 12-

**Do not take along any gold or silver or copper in your belts; take no bag for the journey, or extra tunic, or sandals or a staff; for the worker is worth his keep.  
Matthew 10:9-10**

#### **#4. Don't Carry Extra Baggage**

Again the specific instructions are specific to that missions trip. This was a short-term missions trip.

But the mission that Jesus sends us on is not a short-term mission- it is a life mission.

The principle, however is the same- those who accept this mission are committed for life.

What does that mean for us?

It means that Kingdom people are always looking at the baggage that they are carrying around and asking the question- "Have I acquired stuff that is distracting to my mission?"

In the spy movies the real spies cannot settle down and establish long-term relationships. This of course serves the movie needs well since it allows for a new romance around every corner.

But there is an ostensible reason for this- a person with long term relationship will be unwilling to pack up on short notice and embark on the next adventure.

Let's be very clear- shallow relationships are not the Kingdom way and a man and woman's first responsibilities are to their families.

But the Bible is very clear that we are to be people who are not encumbered by things.

From the beginning of time, the mark of God's people has often been that they don't have material possessions.

The Bible is also clear that not everyone is called to live this way- in fact few are called to live this way- however the principle that we must always be willing to give up "stuff" in favour of our Kingdom mission is at the heart of what it means when we are asked "Your mission, should you choose to accept it . . ."

One of the exercises that I try to remember during communion service, which we will have next week is, doing a mental check list of my "stuff" and asking myself if it is compromising my willingness to accept the call to mission.

In some ways this is an unnerving aspect of the question and most if not all of us know the feeling of wondering what "treasure" might suddenly need to go into the superfluous pile.

It is an anxiety that the Bible addresses over and over again with the reminder that God loves us and His game plan is not to make us miserable.

Nonetheless this anxiety is real for most of us.

But there is one more thing that follows from the missional stories of the NT- and one more reason why saying “Yes, I accept the mission!” is wonderful thing to do.

#### **#5. It Will Be An Adventure**

Why do we like movies like James Bond and Mission Impossible? Because, at their best they are adventure stories that keep the edge of your seat.

If we take on the mission that Jesus calls His followers to accept, there is a level at which you will spend the rest of your life wondering what comes next.

Saying “yes” to our mission call is the most exciting and fulfilling thing that you can ever do.

And the Good News is- just like a James Bond or Mission Impossible movie- no matter how tense it seems at times we know that we are going to win in the end!