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# VISION FORWARD

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## DOES THE MISSION HAVE YOU?

Growing up I was on a mission to be like Ozzie Smith. The St. Louis Cardinals' short stop inspired me each time I watched him play. Before a game on tv, I would get dressed in my Cardinal uniform, go to the dining room floor, and wait for him to make a play. When he swung, I swung. When he dove, I dove. When he slid, I slid across my tile floor.

But though I was on a mission to be like Ozzie, that mission didn't have me. It turned out I would become not a baseball player but a pastor.

Often companies or individuals say they're on a mission, that they have a mission, but then a few years in or even decades later they fail at that mission. Why? Because if *you* have a mission, when the going gets tough, you let go of it. But if a *mission* has you, when the going gets tough, it won't let go of you. environment I love with people I love; and I was getting paid for that! I was so thankful for the opportunity.

This is the question God has posed to me: “Jonathan, do *you* have a mission or does *My* mission have you?” And that is the question God poses to us: “Elim Grace, do *you* have a mission or does *My* mission have you?”

***Do you have a mission  
or does the Mission  
have you?***

### ***DO YOU SEE THE MISSION?***

Matthew records for us a prophecy of Isaiah that says “the people dwelling in darkness have seen a great light, and for those dwelling in the region and shadow of death, on them a light has dawned.” (Matthew 4:17) Isaiah is talking not only about an external darkness of circumstances, but an internal one of heart. A light has dawned on the sick, lost, afflicted, oppressed—those stumbling around in the shadow of death.

On the heels of that Matthew says Jesus began to preach, “the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” A light has dawned, the kingdom is at hand. And then Jesus begins to heal the sick, forgive the sinner, and save the lost.

The Old Testament Scriptures and Jewish tradition taught sickness as resulting directly and/or indirectly from living in a world fallen due to sin. But one day it would all be reversed, undone, made new. Jesus’ defeat of sickness, then, was part of something bigger going on: his overcoming sin and death.

Jesus didn’t come because the *light* had dawned and the *kingdom* had arrived. The light had dawned and the kingdom had arrived because *Jesus* had come—has come! Do you see it? He still heals, forgives, and saves. His kingdom is a kingdom of good news and good works for the whole world: of new possibility, of new life, of new beginnings.

Do we have a mission or does the *Mission* have us?

### ***DO YOU PROCLAIM THE MISSION?***

Matthew goes on to say that Jesus both proclaimed and demonstrated the kingdom (4:23). This is the very nature of the kingdom. It wants to, it must, get *out*. It cannot help but spread, but grow, but shine.

Now, if this is the nature of the kingdom, then we must ask ourselves, first, are we Christians and citizens of the kingdom of God? If so, then we are disciples. And, second, we must ask, what is the nature of the kingdom in *us*? Is it spreading, growing, and shining in and out of us?

***What is the nature of  
God’s kingdom in you?  
Is it shining out?***

accomplished, but through the weak and the foolish and the failures in the eyes of the world (1 Corinthians 1:27). We are not charismatic people as much as we have a charismatic cause: the good news and good works of the Kingdom of God.

Do *you* have a mission or does the *Mission* have you?

### **DO YOU LIVE THE MISSION?**

Jesus begins to preach “the kingdom of heaven is at hand” and then comes across a man named Peter. He says two words to him which he has since repeated to every disciple. Two words which echo across the centuries and the universe: follow me. Not follow the kingdom, but follow *me*.

Ultimately, the mission is a King. To be a disciple is to be the King’s disciple, to show and tell the world how he has healed you, forgiven you, found you, saved you—transformed you and, therefore, everything you do in every area of your life.

The fundamental lesson we all must learn as disciples is that what counts is not what you do for Jesus, but the life that he lives in you. The question is not are you willing to live for Jesus, but are you willing for Jesus to live in and through you (Galatians 2:20)? This was, and remains, the key difference between the disciples (4:19) and the crowds (4:25). Some followed miracles, some followed the King.



But “Who is this King of Glory?” (Psalm 24:8) To answer we look back to the book of Exodus.

God has saved and delivered Israel from captivity and slavery to Egypt. He leads them out and brings them to a mountain, Sinai. There he calls Moses up and descends to speak with Moses. From the outside there is smoke and fire, lightning and thunder, but on the inside something else is going on. Moses is pleading with God, asking for God’s presence to go with them, to which God promises yes.

But then Moses asks for something *more*. What else besides God’s presence could Moses want? He wants to see God’s glory. How does God respond? By saying that he will cause all his goodness to pass before Moses (Exodus 33:18-19). Moses asks to see God’s glory and God reveals his goodness to Moses. Moses descends the mountain transformed. Yet, it wasn’t the smoke and fire or thunder and lightning that changed and satisfied Moses’s heart. It was God’s goodness.

“Who is this King of Glory?” “I will cause all my goodness to pass before you.” It wasn’t the power of Jesus or his miracles that ultimately changed a person’s life. It was his goodness revealed to their heart. This is what Jesus prayed for in the last hours of his life. “Father, the hour has come; glorify your Son that the Son may glorify you.” (John 17:1)

“Who is this King of glory?” “I will cause all my goodness to pass before you on the cross in the death of my Son.” There on the cross, the hour had come, and the greatest, most magnificent, display of God’s glory and goodness was revealed. The King laid down his life for us all. In Jesus, God both proclaimed and demonstrated his eternal love for the world. His mission was *you*.

Leo Tolstoy opened his novel, *Anna Karenina*, with these words: “All happy families are alike; each unhappy family is unhappy in its own way.” What does each member of the family of God have in common? In what way are all happy disciples alike? They have each laid down their life for their King. Deep down his goodness, his glory, has got a hold on them and it won’t let them go.

Jesus asks us today, “Do *you* have a mission or does *My* mission have you?”

## WHAT WE ARE CALLED TO: A REMINDER

We have been “created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared before hand, that we should walk in them” (Ephesians 2:10).

To “walk in” Christ would mean to live a lifestyle that is created, shaped, empowered, and directed by the Holy Spirit. Biblically, “to walk” means a singular way and direction of living out your entire life.

So to “walk in” good works would mean to live a lifestyle of works created, shaped, empowered, and directed by the Holy Spirit. Living out these good works is a necessary component to the mission of God’s kingdom and the power of the gospel of Jesus Christ.



“Good works” should have the effect of being “light,” shining and illuminating the love, kindness, compassion, power, and wisdom of Jesus. Good works prepare the way for the good news of the gospel to be heard. While there are many good works we are called to walk in, some of them include:

- ...helping the poor, sick, and needy around us*
- ...prioritizing small groups for the sake of building friendship, trust, and generosity*
- ...reaching women looking for a way out of addiction*
- ...seeking the longterm health and prosperity of our city by investing our resources (finances, time, people, energy) in innovative ways*
- ...equipping and supporting single parents and foster families*
- ...mentoring in the areas of marriage and finances*