

**KEY VERSE:**

*“Soon afterwards he went on through cities and villages, proclaiming and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. The twelve were with him....” (Luke 8:1)*

**I**n the three years that Jesus Christ was with his disciples, there was one theme that was central to his message: the kingdom of God. “Kingdom” is referenced more than 122 times in the Synoptic Gospels. The message of the kingdom of God was so imperative that during the time leading up to his ascension, Christ pays a series of visits to his disciples to speak to them one last time about the kingdom (Acts 1:3). In this, Christ – the loving teacher - was making a final appeal to his disciples: “...to always remember the kingdom of God...”

The kingdom of which Jesus speaks is not secular in nature. The kingdom that Jesus speaks provides a sound alternative to the threatening Roman imperial system of the first century and the dominating systems of today. Oppression and status have no bearing in this kingdom. Liberation is the rule of the day, for whom the Son sets free is freed indeed. (John 8:38)

Noted theologian Mortimer Arias describes the reign of God as multidimensional. It is a kingdom that *has come* through the person of Jesus Christ; *will come* in expectation of the promises and is at in the midst of *coming* in which oppressive social orders are confronted and dismantled. For this cause, the church of Christ is called to partner with the Holy Spirit and help usher people in the reign of God. Endeavoring to make known the kingdom of God to the world, the church will fulfill its divine mission.

**KEY VERSE:**

*“And he invited Philip to get in and sit beside him.” (vv. 30b)*

**S**upposed God asked you to leave your familiar surroundings and go to the desert? How would you respond? Would you do it? This was the directive given to Philip when an angel of the Lord instructed him to venture down the road from Jerusalem to Gaza. Philip was among the believers who fled into Judea and Samaria when a great wave of persecution swept over the church in Jerusalem. As he went about the land preaching the gospel, great miracles and healings were performed in the name of Jesus Christ. Soon, he developed a great following in which men, women and children were baptized in the faith.

Just when it seemed that his ministry was taking off, Philip is told to leave. While some may have doubted his decision to step down from a successful ministry to travel to the desert, Philip knew that this was the voice of God. Assured of this, he obeyed. There, he found an Ethiopian eunuch eager to receive the Good News. All he needed was someone to explain the scriptures to him.

Today, there are millions of persons like the Ethiopian eunuch. Some may physically live in desert lands while others may be experiencing a spiritually desert-like place. Such persons are inviting believers to give them good news about their current situation. Through our willingness to venture outside our comfort zones in obedience to God and meet people where they are, we too can be used like Philip to share the Good News about the Kingdom of God.

**KEY VERSE:**

*"...therefore ask the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into his harvest."*

**T**he very essence of Christ is unique. He who is divine took the form of a human. Having done so, he hungered, thirsted and at times grew weary. Part of his weariness came from seeing the desperate multitudes - those who were "helpless and harassed" and who did not know to whom they could turn for help. Christ was moved with compassion for them. Christ then turns to his disciples and laments that there are vast fields of persons that are ready to be harvested (John 4:35). Alas, the laborers are few.

Christ not only expects us to empathize with the helpless and harassed, but our compassion is predicated on action. This "call to action," however, should not be interpreted as an immediate deployment of missionaries into the mission field. Rather, it is important to note the *first* directive Christ gave when reaping the harvest. He instructs the believers to *ask* that laborers be sent. "Ask," in this sense, means to "pray."

Prayer is an essential part of missions. Although everyone may not be called to be a missionary, everyone does have special gifts that can carry out the Great Commission. Prayer is one of those special gifts. The church should therefore continue to commit itself to prayer for missionaries and ministers of the gospel everywhere who are called to be day-laborers. In this Adam Clarke contends that such laborers "come into the harvest, not to become lord of it, not to live in the labor of others, but to work, and to labor this day."

**KEY VERSE:**

*"Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done!" (John 4:29)*

**T**he day started out normal. She rose early to perform her daily chores. Having finished them, she thirsts. She places her empty water pot upon her head and sets out for the well. Little did she realize that she would not come back the same. There, she encounters a man. She was no stranger to men. In fact, she had known several. But this one was different. He wanted not to take from her. Instead, he wanted to give. He filled her with that which she had long quenched: the spring of eternal life.

When the disciples happened upon the scene with food in hand, they were indignant and questioned why Jesus would talk to her, a Samaritan. Though they had traveled with Christ extensively, they still missed the point of his ministry: Christ came for all people, especially this woman. Excited about her encounter with the Messiah, she went back to her village and bid everyone to “come see a man who told me everything I have ever done.” To this, they responded.

We can learn a valuable lesson from this story. True missionary service stems from one having a personal encounter with the Messiah. One cannot genuinely proclaim about “the one who saves” unless one has received his salvation. Secondly, salvation produces results. While the disciples left and brought back lunch, the woman left and brought back a village. As a result of her witness, a great harvest was reaped and people were added to the Kingdom that day.

**KEY VERSE:**

*Ask of me, and I will make the nations your heritage, and the ends of the earth your possession. (Psalm 2:8)*

**C**hances are you have seen it plastered on a highway billboard. Then again, perhaps you learned it in Church School. Wherever you saw it, whenever you learned it, more than likely you are familiar with the words of John 3:16: *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him may not perish but may have eternal life.”*

This verse is altogether poetic and prophetic. Though we are invited to live in fellowship with God, it is hard to fathom the enormous love that he has for us. Even the angels in heaven marvel, *“What are human beings that you are mindful of them?”* (Psalm 8:4a) His love is unconditional. Knowing this, we realize that God’s love is for the *entire* world and is not limited to one part. He has a heart for all nations.

For this cause, God permits us to “ask of him the nations...” This declaration confirms a couple of key points. First, it pronounces that the earth is the Lord’s. Every nation in the world belongs to him. Second, it affirms that God yearns for the lost soul. He desires that no person would perish and patiently awaits all to come into repentance (2 Peter 3:9). Third, as members of the body of Christ we cannot be content in our having received the good news when there are nations that have yet to hear. We must therefore stand in intercession on behalf of the nations, especially those yet to come into the understanding of who Christ is. This is the charge to keep we have, from our God we aim to glorify.