

Intro:

Jesus: encounter. Why this series?

- For seekers: I believe we are in a season where we will see more seekers here. Perhaps you are one today- we're glad you're here. Perhaps you've been thinking about inviting a friend to check Jesus out- these next few months will be perfect.

- For followers: we are constantly in need to have more Jesus of course. But during this season, I believe there is a unique way He wants to directly challenge us through encountering him in the Gospels. And so we're here, letting him meet, confront, challenge, encourage, support us each week in the multifaceted ways He does it.

This week, our topic is God's purpose for those who want to follow him. And the question we have is this quite simple: What does it take to get in touch with God's mission, God's purpose?

Now, before we get into this, a few things should be noted about this idea of God's mission and purpose.

1. We all want to live with purpose and mission. And especially in a church like ours, where we are on the younger side. The key question, of course, is who's purpose are we living with. Our parents? Our friends? Our own? Or God's? While this is not the main question of today, I would hope that all of us, regardless of where we are, would realize that live out God's purpose for you and I is the best option.

2. What exactly is God's purpose and mission? In short, to see God's goodness permeate every aspect of this world, transforming it and bringing it back in right relationships with God. It is something that begins with us first as an individual, letting God be the center of all of our life, not us. And from there it involves us being used by God to touch all the things around us- family, work, play- everything for the sake of Him.

We could say more, but I've said enough. I hope I've at least got us in the frame of mind to start thinking that "oh, God's purpose is important for me." Let's go to our Bible passage and let God speak for himself. We'll read the text and reflect on two main points.

Read Text: Luke 6:12-26

Jesus is getting ready for God's plan and mission for and through Him in his 3 years on this planet by selecting his inner core, known as the apostles, and by laying out, in a message, the basic values of this new plan and mission. As he does, we are confronted with two things that we must embrace to be in line with His mission.

Radical Intimacy with God.

Text: Jesus is in line with God's mission through His intimacy with the Father. We see this radical intimacy in the opening section, as the text says clearly that Jesus goes to a mountain to pray, to talk things out with God the Father. It's a pretty radical description of the kind of relationship, the kind of intimacy, Jesus has with God the Father. We mentioned last week that Jesus is often finding personal, secluded time to pray and talk with God the Father. And we mentioned last week that there is a constant need for us to do the same, to develop an ever dependent, intimate relationship with God. I don't think this is an accident that this theme keeps coming up. It has to mean that there are at least a few of us that need to hear this constantly in this season.

Followers: Perhaps you're constantly feeling the pressure to not spend the time necessary.

Seekers: if this is hitting you, it is most likely time to say "yes" to Jesus' place in your life as your treasure, master, center.

Do we have that radical intimacy that brings us in line with God's mission?

Radical Values that go against much of the world around us.

Text: We see this as Jesus comes down from choosing the twelve, and he begins to teach the crowd that has gathered. They are of course a broken crowd, and as such (based on what we know of the time period concerning their physical condition) a crowd of social outcasts. And so Jesus begins with quite a introduction. What is his point? Who is he talking about anyway? Three clarifications.

1. Who is he is not talking about. These are not simply social designations or spiritual descriptors. People throughout history have read it as merely social- meaning this is about everyone who is poor, that they will all be blessed when Jesus comes back again, regardless of their relationship with Jesus. People have also read it as merely spiritual- meaning we're talking about a spiritual poverty, spiritual hunger, and so on.

2. Who then is he talking about? The text itself tells us.

Please note:

- the poor/hungry/suffering are descriptors along with those who are verbally assaulted for Jesus/like the prophets of old. So we're talking about people who are trying to get their lives under God- there is a spiritual component here for sure. But we're also talking about those who find themselves in a place on the bottom of the social ladder- these terms cannot be spiritualized, and given the context of v.18-19, it's pretty clear that these are social terms. So we're talking about those who are living in line with God and find themselves in a bottom rung- God has some really good things to say. These were many during Jesus' time, and are many in our time as well.

- rich/well-fed/happy are descriptors along with those who are spoken of well, like the false prophets of old. The false prophets of old were people who supposedly spoke for God to others, but in fact they were lying for the sake of their personal gain- their personal comfort, power, money (Jer. 5:31; 14:13-16; 23:9-15, 27-28; Ezek. 22:23-31; Mic. 2:11). These are people who did not live in line with God at all. And so we're not talking about the rich and socially likeable folks in and of themselves, we're talking about those who have it and pay lip service to God, who utilize God for their personal gain, or who push God out all together. I would think that not a few of us either are like this or brush shoulders with people like this. Woe are we, woe are they.

3. What about us who are in neither category? What of those of us who are genuine Jesus followers, but happen to find ourselves somewhat wealthy, not necessarily on the bottom rung of society?

This gets at the heart of the passage, I think, and at the heart of our the radical values we need to have. This passage is ultimately an expression of the new values of the way of Jesus, and it asks to do at least three things, regardless of category we are in.

a. Embrace the Outcast. Think about your social circle right now. Is there someone that is hard for you to love? Maybe their personality, their race, and so on. If you don't have anyone that is hard for you to love in your circle, you really aren't living this out.

b. Dethrone wealth, comfort, power. We do this by giving generously. (Luke 10:32-34). Are we really doing this? We need to keep reassessing ourselves, I believe. Do we really need that new set of clothes, that new gadget that's just come out? Are we really giving generously? The average Christian in the US gives 3%. I don't think that's really generous. I should note that giving to people you know goes a long way is pretty powerful; the personal nature of that goes a long way.

c. Talk for Jesus, regardless of circumstance.

Do we value the way of Jesus above values around us? Where are we with these things?

Questions, Comments

Conclusion and Challenge

Extra Study Notes:

v. 14- Why does Jesus need twelve apostles? A: there were 12 tribes in Israel, God's people first assembled in the Old Testament. These 12 tribes, this nation of Israel, were supposed to represent God to the world. But they did not, in fact could not, because of sin. As Jesus starts God's work in the world, he is making a statement that he can and will do what Israel could not.

v.14- Judas son of James is same as Thaddeus in Mark 3:18 and Matt. 10:3

v.26- on false prophets, see Jer. 5:31; 14:13-16; 23:9-15, 27-28; Ezek. 22:23-31; Mic. 2:11.