

“We’re On a Mission From God”

2 Corinthians 5:11-21 • Genesis 3:8-24

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Rev. Charles S. Blackshear • November 13, 2016

Some of you may remember a movie that came out about 25 years ago. The film was a story of redemption and it featured two prominent theologians of the time, Jake and Elwood. If you saw the movie *The Blues Brothers*, which you probably shouldn't have, you'll remember that line they use a number of times is, "We're on a mission from God." Well let me tell you, if you are a follower of Jesus you really are on a mission from God.

Today is our annual missions Sunday and we have invited a number of our mission partners to join us this morning for the Missions Fair over in Kleberg Hall. So today I want to talk about the importance of missions in the church. Let's start with the most important question, What is mission? When I was growing up I remember our church supported a missionary couple in Mexico who would come speak to the church every few years with his slide show and some items made by the people he worked with. At some point we began having what they called "mission dinners" following worship once a month where some of the church members would cook and you could purchase lunch. The profits went to the missionaries we supported. I am not criticizing the importance of the church supporting full-time missionaries. But there's more to missions than just sending money.

The problem today is that we have "professionalized" missions. We say, "Mission work is for professional missionaries" and so we give a little money to help support them and we feel like we've done our part. Missiologist David Bosch says, "Mission is not primarily an activity of the church, but an attribute of God. God is a missionary God." He goes on, "Mission is thereby seen as a movement from God to the world; the church is viewed as an instrument for that mission. There is church because there is mission, not vice versa. To participate in mission is to participate in the movement of

God's love toward people, since God is a fountain of sending love."

The word *mission* comes from the Latin word that means "to send." When we talk about the mission of the church we're talking about God sending us to participate in *His* mission. What is God's mission? We just heard it in 2 Corinthians 5. Beginning in verse 17, "Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself." God the Father sent the Son so that you and I would be reconciled to God. But not only did Jesus come to save us, he gave us a job to do. "All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation." Paul then says, "We are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us."

That points us to the mission God has for you and for me in the world. In our reading from Genesis 3 we learn the effects of Adam and Eve's sin of disobeying God and eating the forbidden fruit. But this is where we also learn of our work in the world as followers of Jesus and as his church. The mission of God is to restore what was lost in the Fall and that's where we are to work as well.

Let's look closely at the effects of that sin. The first and most significant consequence was that our relationship with God was broken. Verse 8 says that they "hid themselves from the presence of the Lord God." You and I do the same thing. We distance ourselves from God. We try to hide. We pretend God can't see us when we sin. When you recognize that tendency in yourself then you will be better able to help other people. When you understand that there is more going on inside a person than what you see on the outside, you realize that all

of us are trying to hide from God, you will be able to love people enough to truly help.

Genesis 3 ends with Adam and Eve being banished from the Garden of Eden. They no longer have direct access to God. In fact, God placed the cherubim and the flaming sword to keep them from getting back in. There's no going back. You and I can't get back in, either. The only way to repair the relationship is for God to act. And that's what He did by coming in the person of Jesus. God sent His Son to restore the broken relationship. We participate in that mission by pointing people to Christ. All Christian missions will help people know Jesus.

The second consequence of the Fall is broken relationships with other people. When God asked Adam if he had eaten from the forbidden tree, Adam immediately blames Eve. "The woman whom *you* gave to be with me, she gave me fruit of the tree, and I ate." Eve wasn't about to take the blame, either. As the old saying goes, "Adam blamed Eve and Eve blamed the snake, who didn't have a leg to stand on." God tells Eve, "Your desire shall be contrary to your husband." Because of sin, your relationships will be susceptible to distrust and conflict. But remember, God has given us the ministry of reconciliation. A big part of the work of the church is to help people reconcile. And I think it's safe to say there are plenty of opportunities for reconciliation these days.

The third consequence of the Fall that we are called to help restore is physical. God's plan for his creation was for us to live forever with ample food and free of death and disease. When sin entered the world so did death. Remember, God had told them that if they ate the fruit they would surely die. They didn't

drop dead on the spot but you could say they began to die at that moment. From that point on bodily decay began to occur. God said, "You are dust, and to dust you shall return."

Christians are called to serve people who are suffering the effects of illness and injury and aging and addictions. We are to help bring wholeness to people's lives. This is why we are involved in ministries that help meet the basic needs of food, clothing, and shelter.

In addition to death and decay, surviving now requires hard work. "Cursed is the ground because of you; in pain you shall eat of it all the days of your life...By the sweat of your face you shall eat bread." The physical consequences of sin also have economic consequences. So part of the mission of God is to help overcome economic difficulties. The church should be involved in programs that help people develop skills in order to earn and learn.

So now that you know what missions is, the real question is, how do you get involved? I'm glad you asked. When the service is over in a few minutes, I want to encourage each of you to go to Kleberg Hall. Visit with our ministry partners. Ask them how you can be involved. Find out what their needs are. Don't say, "I've done my part, it's time for someone else to do it." God has given you today and He expects you to use it for His Kingdom. Every one of you can do something. Ask yourself, "Is there a need that's not being met? How can I help restore what was lost because of sin?" And then do it. Get involved. As someone said, "God doesn't have a mission for his church, he has the church for his mission."

Amen.