

NATIONAL COMMUNITY CHURCH

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The Gospel – A1:8 Missions

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I met Tony and Lisa on a random weekend in May of this past year, and little did I know the long journey that had taken Tony to come that weekend. He was from a small town in Delaware and in his own words; he said he lived a hedonistic lifestyle about his own personal pursuits and enjoyment. But along the way there was a guy named Charlie and they both volunteered at the local firehouse and they would just have these casual conversations about faith and about Christ, and they were seeds planted. Well, life than happens, and a lot of things went on in Tony's life. But, he had two major car accidents, one of them was ridiculous, I mean, the entire driver's side of the car was just gone, it was mauled, it was pushed in. And somehow he spent two weeks in the hospital and he came away without any long-term injury, so it was a miracle, and he said he shared that it should have been a wakeup call in my life, but it wasn't. And so he kept doing his thing and going on and it wasn't until he pursued the wrong relationship and ended up in the wrong circumstances and ended up spending a year in prison that he felt like God got a hold of his life. And he said he described that season as heavy, prompting a year in prison. And listen how he talked about it, he said jail was my dry place; 60 different personalities in one area, but one of them was a guy named Buzzy, a former heroin addict that shared his faith and he shared his faith with me. Next thing I know, I started going to Bible study. Really, I just went to escape the craziness, but then it started to soak in. This guy would show up every week and share Bible and faith with us. And something was ignited in me, it was like a light switch, this is what I've been missing the whole time. It wasn't just his words though, it wasn't just Bible study, it was him. Actually, it was what was in him that attracted me and so when he spoke of Jesus, what was in him made sense to me and it was the word of God, the spirit of God that got in me, that began to change me. I showed up at NCC one week after I got out of prison. I expected to feel a sense of guilt, but instead I felt inspiration and I was compelled by both the people and the message. I had the desire to pour myself out because I saw the way the church was speaking and living out a message of hope. Tony is now a DC firefighter. He's now engaged to Lisa. They're going to get married in 2019 at the DC Dream Center. This is pretty awesome, right? A few months ago, Tony was baptized. God continues the work in him, and here's the thing; now, you see the picture and you know who is baptizing him? A guy named Charlie, a firefighter who planted seed and then a guy named Buzzy, a former addict who was saved by the grace of God came along and he watered that seed and then NCC people at what National Community Church came along and they nurtured that seed, but all of those people and entities would say this. It wasn't me that saved Tony. No, it was God at work before any of us showed up. It was God at work, through word, it was God at work in the dark recesses of the prison, it was God at work to save him and God at work now sending him. God was all across his story, working and moving. Yet he allowed us to step in and be a part of his plan, of part of his mission in the process.

So today, Jesus, we come to you and I just pray your anointing over this word today. I ask that you would fill it, that you would help us to understand what our part is. Today we ask that you would empower us, equip us, teach us to speak like you, to live like you, to walk like you. In your name, we pray these things. Amen.

In I Corinthians, people were associating their faith with a person instead of the divine and so there was factioning going on. They started to have different factions depending on who they came to faith under and so Paul reminds them what the message actually was. It's in I Corinthians chapter three, and that's our text today and we start in verse four and it says this...

⁴ *For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not mere men?*

He's saying, we identify ourselves or our faith through people, but aren't those people merely human?

Verse Five...

⁵ *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul?*

Notice he doesn't say who is Paul? He doesn't say who is Apollos? He's not talking about their identity, the who, he's talking instead about their function, the what,

⁵ *What then is Apollos? And what is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave opportunity to each one.*

He says servants not in whom you believe, but through whom you believe. Now, I wonder for those of us who have faith here today, I wonder if I could just take us down memory lane for just a moment, okay. So, let's think back, who was that person who shared the Gospel with you? Get their name in your head, go back for..., was it a grandma? Was it a friend? Was that a pastor? Was it a coworker? Now, what do you think of that person? What's your feeling towards that person? I think if you're like me, you have incredible feelings of gratitude because they saw you on a path and they saw potential in you didn't they? And then they helped you turn a different direction and our lives are changed because of what happened through that person and we have such a deep sense of profound gratitude for those who came before us. You know, it's Thanksgiving weekend, I wonder if it's worth a text this weekend, maybe it's worth a phone call to those who came before you and God worked through them into your life. Here we have the apostle Paul who started the church at Corinth on his second missionary journey to Asia Minor and he starts all kinds of churches in the scripture. He starts the church at Philippi and then he goes to Thessaloniki and he starts a church there and then he starts a church at Berea and then he comes here and he starts this church in Corinth and these people come to faith in Christ through Paul. But then he does something, he hands the baton off to a second pastor and he brings Apollos in. And Apollos comes in and people come to faith in Christ through Apollos, and so these are spiritual fathers, if you will, of very young believers. That's why they say, I am of Paul. It's the genetic case, it's like spiritual genetics. That's who they look at the beginning of their faith, but it's not that person who did the work in them, right? The person of Jesus did the work in them through those who came and gave the message. What is their function? They are servants. It's faith in Jesus through the person that brought the message. Some of us here today are in trouble because we have a faith in Mark Batterson. We have a faith in Heather Zempel, in Joel Schmidgall, in Joshua, in Rob, in Marion, in Dave, whoever that is, whatever... We have a faith in the pr...

But, listen, some of us are in trouble today. Do you hear me? Because we have a faith in that person who is a great communicator or in the politician or in the next up and comer or in that person who lines up perfectly ideologically with us but are ahead of us but I'm going to tell you something today. Don't have a faith and a personality. We have faith in Christ and he shows us who he is through different individuals. He can get a hold of the heart of a man and a woman and the soul in a way and he turns us and he changes us from the inside out, doesn't he? God has been working on the heart long before you ever realized it. It's what John Wesley would call that prevenient grace, His grace that was evident that was present long before you ever realized it. We heard it from Tony, God worked on him for 20 years in his life before he realized that he worked in a young man named Charlie he worked through him. He worked in the dark places in prison. He worked through the accidents where it got so rough. He worked at all these different points. It was God at different points revealing himself, relentless in a never ending pursuit until one day there was an acknowledgement through faith. We often see God at work after he has worked instead of during. Right? Isn't that how it works? We're walking on, where's God, where's God, where's..., and then we look back, oh my goodness, look at how God worked, all those different places. Why isn't he working right now? I guess I'll keep moving. Whoa, look at that. He worked back there. We acknowledge his prevenient grace that was working all along in our life. The steps of the righteous are ordered by the Lord.

Verse six...

⁶ *I planted, Apollos watered, but God was causing the growth.*

The Bereans study Bible says, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God made it grow.*

King James, *I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.*

Now, there are different kinds of tenses in the Greek that determine the action of a verb. So, this is critical. This understanding kind of sets the tone; it sets the foundation for our understanding to the implications of this scripture. How something happens can be more important than when something happens. Okay, so I can take two statements that are very similar, but how they happen are very unique. So I ate at Whole Foods or I have been eating at Whole Foods. Now the first is fine, but the second is going to make me go broke, isn't it right? We say it on the Hill, its whole paycheck because it takes your entire paycheck. I mean, that's good food, right? But woof, they need to have a bank next to every Whole Foods, right? The tense, just the uniqueness of how the action of the verb is used is critical to the understanding of what is being communicated.

So let's look at some examples here. So we've got the punctiliar, which essentially means it occurs once. That's the type of tense that is, it's a singular occurrence in time. And then there's linear an action that is in progress or an ongoing action. There are different examples throughout the scriptures where the tense is critical to our understanding.

Let's take Matthew 28:18, and it's, it's one of the mission's passages that we often come back to...

Go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the father, son and Holy Spirit.

Go and make disciples, so it's not a punctiliar action. It's not go. You go on the on the trip to Tanzania and then you're all done. I have completed my mission, it's over, I have gone and made disciples. No, it's not punctiliar it's linear. It's go, it's a daily going that every day we get up, we go and we make disciples. It's a continual verb, a continual action that we are called to. So, the first understanding is accurate, but the second understanding amplifies what this scripture means to our lives.

So, here's what it sounds like in the King James Version. You've got Paul, Paul planted the seed, then Apollos watered the seed and then God made it grow, right? And so it all comes, finally, God steps into the equation and he takes what we've done and we've and he made it grow. These are the implications that can happen, but here's the NASB, which is our text today. So there's, there's Paul that planted the seed, and then there's Apollos who water the seed, and then God who caused the growth. God came back; God was causing the growth before the seed was ever planted. Do you hear what I'm saying today? His prevenient grace was at work all the way back here, and his grace is at work right here, right now. And His grace will still come. Do you know that God has been at work in your life? He was at work long before you ever knew it in your mind, long before you saw it in your eyes; God was causing growth in your life. Today he is stirring up something in our spirit, isn't he? Every moment of every day and in the future, there is still more were to come. He will continue to grow you up as you step into his graces. God is at work all over us, these are the implications of the scripture. God is accomplishing his plan and his purpose, that's what verse seven is saying. So, then neither the one who plants, nor the one who waters is anything but God who causes the growth.

Philippians chapter one, Paul says that he says I am confident that he who began a good work in you. Who began a good work? Was it the messenger, was it the pastor, the grandma, was it the friend? Who was it? It was God. He who began a good work in you will be what? Will be faithful to complete it. It's God at work over the span of our life and beyond it and before it. God is sovereign and at work in all places at all times. He is everywhere, but he is here right now today.

You know in worship today I felt such a deep conviction just uh, I'm thinking through some of my notes and all of a sudden God just took me on a sidetrack. I am here today, right here, right now. My word is everlasting, it is eternal, but that eternal is here today. The eternal... Do you know the eternal is here today, right now, speaking and moving and acting and calling out and stirring up and working within us? His eternal work is here right now today.

Here's what Tozer said. AW Tozer said this...

"Probably the hardest thought of all for our natural egotism to entertain is that God does not need our help. We commonly represent him as a busy, eager, somewhat frustrated Father hurrying about seeking help to carry out His benevolent plan to bring peace and salvation to the world..."

Too many missionary appeals are based upon this fancied frustration of Almighty God. An effective speaker can easily excite pity in his hearers, not only for the heathen but for the God who has tried so hard and so long to save them and has failed for want of support. I fear that

thousands of young persons enter into Christian service from no higher motive than to help deliver God from the embarrassing situation His love has gotten Him into and His limited abilities seem unable to get Him out of. Add to this a certain degree of commendable idealism and a fair amount of compassion for the underprivileged, and you have the true drive behind much Christian activity today."

I don't totally like this quote because it can be somewhat demotivational can't it to mission? You mean God's not dependent on my actions. His work doesn't rise and fall on whether I step in and step up or maybe it's the opposite, maybe it's hyper motivational. Maybe it's the deepest level of motivation that that God involves us not in his mission, not because he needs us, but because he loves us. That his eternal grace, that his eternal plan is going to press forward, but he stops. He pauses to say, you know what, we're going to do this together. We're going to co-mission and step out together. Our spirits should be provoked by his love.

I just want to give three quick reminders to this idea of mission for us to think about as we gain this understanding throughout the month of November. Three quick reminders today in the first is this. The power is in the seed, the power is in the seed. Number two, the variable is the soil. Number three, the calling is to plant, it's to sow.

Number one, the power is in the seed. What is the seed? The seed is the word of God. There's the written word of God, right? We've been given this; it's a gift to us. It's God's living word is, excuse me, it's his written word, but then there's the living word. John 1; in the beginning was the word of God. So, the word of God was in that we had this and that God had this to help him in the very beginning. No, there's the written word and there's the living word, which is Jesus. In the beginning there was the word and the word was God, and the word was with God. We know Jesus as a part of the trinity, the father, son and spirit. He was God, but he was also with God. And then we go to verse 14 and it says, and the word was made flesh, that's what we know as the incarnation, God becoming flesh, him sending his son into the world, we call him Jesus the Christ. The word was made flesh and he dwelt among us. So, the seed is the word, the seed is the Gospel. What is the Gospel? The Gospel is a person, the person is Jesus. Do we know that the power, it doesn't come in us, right? The power comes in Jesus. It's not through my action. It's not through your word. It's not through his persuasiveness. It's not through her eloquence. The power comes in Jesus. There is power in the seed. This is freeing you guys, isn't it? This has incredible implications for our lives.

1 Peter, 1:23 *for you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable,*

I love the King James, it says, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible seed through the living and enduring word of God.

The seed is perfect, the seed is good, the seed is never changing, it will always work. The seed has no expiration date. The power is within the seed. We feel this certain pressure, don't we? Like I have to produce. I have to produce faith in somebody else. I have to pull that out of that, I got to get that, I've got to produce certain things. I've got to produce salvation or redemption or a change of heart or a change of life and we live with this pressure. Why do we live with that pressure? Because we think it's all dependent on us. Don't be. We think it's our job. We think the

power is all in me and I've got to take care of business and hand it off to God who's the closer. He comes in and the ninth inning, he takes it home, right? No, God is at work, he's at work here, but remember he's at work all the way back here today and he's doing his work through us so it relieves us from this pressure, but we still get this opportunity and we get this responsibility.

Acts 1:8, for you will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you will be my witnesses.

That scripture is not about us. The scripture is about God at work, in and through us, isn't it? And so we offer him ourselves on a daily basis. If we believe the power is in the seed, then the pressure's off, isn't it? If we believe the power is in the seed, it releases all excuses not to share it. We are called to share the Gospel because the power is in the Gospel and that is Jesus.

Paul said, I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes. Romans 1:16

This week, our staff heard from one of our missionaries in Poona, India. Timothy came and he shared. He works for Teen Challenge. This is a unique Teen Challenge that has a ministry there and it's a ministry they run for kids living on the streets who come from women in the red light district. Statistics show that 90 percent of kids who are born in the red light district will never leave the red light district. So Teen Challenge comes alongside and they take kids in from the streets. They love on them. They share Christ with them, they give them a safe place, they give them an education, they try to give them a chance at life. And so he's with us this week and he's sharing his story. And, Timothy is indigenous to Poona and so he's talking about how they're kind of in a place of tension at all times. How the people in the district don't like them because they're halting their economy. They're taking kids off the street, but then people in the agencies don't like them because they're crossing these castes system lines because they're elevating children and kids from those outcasts, and so he lives in this tension. But he said this to us, he said, but you know, what? We will not stop speaking and living and preaching Jesus Christ and his Gospel, who he is because we've seen what he does and we know that the power is in Christ. And he said this to us, he exhorted us in this way, he said, stop worrying. Why do you worry so much? I just want to tell you today, stop worrying. He said it from his context and he said, because we've realized something that we walk around and we think it's all dependent on us, but it's not. We have the Gospel of Jesus and all the power is in him. This man in impossible circumstances working with impossible situations and hopeless situation said, stop worrying because the power is not in me, it's in him. But guess what? He is in me. So where's the power the power's in me, but it's not in me, but it's in me because Christ the Gospel is in me and he's working in me, but he's working through me. The power is in the seed today.

He says that in impossible situations because he has people like Raj who are next to him, who he's been working at this for 20 years. Raj was on the streets in Bombay when he worked there at a Teen Challenge and they brought him in, this kid on the streets and they gave them a safe place. They gave him a home and they started to teach him. He ended up learning and finding himself. He goes off to college graduates and he felt like he needed to come back and give back to the place that saved his life. So today Raj is alongside Timothy, working and leading the boy's home in Poona coming out of the very place that now he's rescuing kids from. So when he says,

stop worrying, he knows the power that has come through the seed of... the power is in the seed. That might be a place for an amen right there. I thought maybe some faith would be exhorted in our...

So number two, the variable is soil. So the seed is perfect, it is the constant. The variable then is the soil. What is the soil in a kingdom harvest? The soil is our heart. The spirit seeks out the heart. He evaluates a person by the heart. He looks within any searches us. It's often times the prayer before our sermon that we kind of give way to this. We oftentimes pray, God, we ask now that you would ready our hearts, prepare our hearts till our hearts today because we know that the Gospel, that the word is always good, the seed is always good. It's the heart; it's the variable that needs to be ready. Don't underestimate the potential that is in the heart. Maybe you can't understand how God would use that person or maybe you've given up on that person or you've given up on yourself or maybe that person is from such a broken situation or you've seen them broken for so long that you have just let go and you've given up.

There's a woman named Regia (?) at the DC Dream Center and she has spent more time at the DC Dream Center than any one of our staff. It's because decades ago, every night she would go there when it was abandoned apartment building, she would go there to get her fix and then she started going there to buy drugs wholesale so she would buy them and then she would sell enough so that she can continue to keep herself going. She did this for years and then she started praying to Jesus, she said, and for a year she was using and praying to Jesus when she was arrested. And when the officer put the cuffs on her hands she said, thank you Jesus. He said, what'd you say? I didn't hear that one before. Because God was at work. Her heart was ... She was at such a point of brokenness that at that point she then began to pursue God in such a deep way and she started to overcome over the coming years, and that's not an easy process to overcome addiction. And for the coming year she began to overcome and pursue God and overcome that old lifestyle. And I don't have time to tell her whole story, but I'll fast forward to the point that is this; every single Monday, Regia comes to the DC Dream Center and counsels those who are trying to overcome addictions and problems in their life. God has brought her full circle. Somebody who was in an impossible situation, somebody who everybody had given up on God was not done with their lives. Let's not judge the hearts of the other. Let's not make up our mind for somebody else. Don't decide who is ready or who deserves the grace of God. There's a beautiful story waiting to be written in the person that we have given up on.

One quick side question, is that person you? Have you given up on yourself? Don't stop the pen in the hand of an almighty God who is still at work.

Number three, the calling is the plants. We know the power is in the seed, the Gospel. We know the variable is the soil, that's our heart. Therefore, our calling is to plant, to walk around every day, throwing out seed, just walking around on a daily basis, casting seed, wherever we go, sharing the Gospel wherever we go. What's the Gospel? Jesus sharing, Jesus wherever we go. How do we share Jesus? Well, we've got to know his life. How did Jesus live? Well to some, he came and he spoke boldly to some he came he exhorted, to some he came and he offered grace to some he just came and he touched, to some he sat with, to some he stood up for. But the scriptures say that Jesus was filled with the Holy Spirit of God and so he discerned every situation and person uniquely, there was no formula for mission. It was him living in the spirit,

when he took on the mantle of the spirit; his strategy was made up because he followed the spirit and every person in every situation.

So what does it mean to share the Gospel with the people around you? Well, what does it look like? I think it looks like Jesse or it looks like Lynn Weatherby, who every week on a weekly basis goes and visits one of our shut-ins. I think it looks like Nina who will raid our pantry to pull things out, to go down and give those things away to some friends living under the bridge. I think it looks like JD and Melissa who care enough to step into the messiness of family around them and step into that, help out and pray for those who are hurting. It looks like Ryan who counsels those who are stuck in hurts and habits and hang-ups. It looks like Joseway who is a pastor and goes from table to table at his restaurant and is constantly casting out some seed and sharing Gospel with his coworkers and those who come into his restaurant. It looks like all different situations. It looks like our kids and NCC, kids' ministry and their motto for this month is whenever, wherever. So, 200 blessing bags, they've packed this month. They have raised money in these little barrels they are coin banks. And what they did with all the money in those coin banks is they bought Thanksgiving meals for those in need. They're serving whenever, wherever, all over the city.

In fact, check out one story of just one of our little girls stepping in and trying to live out what Christ is all about. Check out this story.

{Video}

Dad: Olivia came to me and said that she wanted to...

Olivia: do a job

Dad: yes, she said she wanted to do a job. And she said, well, what can we do? And I said, well, maybe we can do a lemonade stand. So, we planned a weekend to do it and got all the stuff. She spent \$20 of her own money, buying all the materials, and I said, alright, we spent \$20 on the materials, now let's think about how we're going to make a profit. So let's think about how we're gonna, how much we're going to charge people. And she said, what's profit? And I was like, well, that's the money that you keep after you make your \$20 back. So it's like keep, oh, it's not for me Daddy, it's for the homeless. And I was like, really, it's for the homeless? She was like, yeah. What did you say?

Olivia: When you asked me do you want to do a lemonade stand. And I said, yes and I was the one who said for the homeless people and I [inaudible].

Dad: Then we said, okay, well we're going to not call it a lemonade stand maybe we'll call it like lemonade for a cause. So, we looked at a few charities and we chose for the Bread for the City. It became like a whole neighborhood thing, like we had neighbors come and donate some money. Elliot was really excited. He donated some money.

Mom: You know it feels really great to see them living out what we embody and what's important to us. We get up and we got a second Saturday service and just to hear and see them have such a heart for people and homeless people and helping out. It feels really, really great.

Dad: We all got behind it. She really inspired the whole family. I think she inspired a the whole street, she inspired the neighborhood.

Mom: What did you guys say you can do now that it's getting cold.

Olivia: We can sell hot chocolate.

{End of Video}

It's finding simple ways to free to share Jesus. I think of our Friends-giving last Saturday and it's for those who are living out on the streets and experiencing homelessness and it's not just a food line, it's a banquet, it's a party, it's a celebration, it's the best meal, Thanksgiving meal in DC that day. But it's also being with, sitting at the table and sharing the grace of God across the table. What is sharing the Gospel? To share the Gospel actually means that we introduce people to Jesus. And sometimes that's in a word, sometimes that's in deed. But let's not cop out. Right? So if you shared actually in word the Gospel with somebody, it doesn't mean you can cop out and just not then act it out and live it out in life. For those of us then who have lived it out or acted it out, it doesn't mean we can cop out and not share it and not speak about it, but we're called into this measure. Salvation doesn't come through the four spiritual laws or the 9Marks or the 16 truths.

But here's what the scripture says in Romans chapter 10,

¹³ *“WHOEVER WILL CALL ON THE NAME OF THE LORD WILL BE SAVED.”*

¹⁴ *But how will they call on Him in whom they have not believed? How will they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how will they hear unless someone tells them?*

¹⁵ *How will they tell them unless they are sent?*

We say it all the time; we don't go to church because we are the church. What is the church? The church is a sent people. We are filled up so that then we are sent back out. Listen to Tony, what he said. Where we started this sermon, we're going to end it right here with what he had to say.

I've been blessed with so much grace that mission is a natural reaction. It's a response mechanism from God's goodness. What he has done in me it can happen in someone else. I want to and I've got to step out. Tony's serving in three different ministries. He's about to get his first mentee at the DC Dream Center. He's pouring himself out.

Do you know that God will always give more through you than he will to you? He'll give to you, but when you begin to become a throughput, the grace of God just keeps pouring out. I just want to end in this simple, reflective question. Are you ready to be poured out?

Jesus, we come to you today and we want to give you everything we have God, because the grace has filled our lives and we are changed from it and we are changed in it. And so Father, I pray that we would be not coerced but inspired today. I pray that your word would provoke us to act out the life of Christ every day, to speak it, to act it, to live it, so take these reflective moments we now have in this song and may we evaluate what it means to pour ourselves out. In Jesus' name we pray, Amen.