

Emphasis Month- October 2011

Overall Theme: The Glory of God: The Reason for Missions

Overall Theme Verse: Psalm 67:1-7

5th Sunday Message (October 30, 2011)

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Message Title- “The Glory of God: The Sure Outcome of Missions”

Scripture Passage- Psalm 67:6,7 (Isaiah 6:3; Revelation 7:9-17)

*⁶ Then the land will yield its harvest,
and God, our God, will bless us.*

*⁷ God will bless us,
and all the ends of the earth will fear him. (NIV)*

Is there anything in this world that has a sure outcome? There was a time when I was asking this question and observing our world, definitely I found that there are some sure outcomes that I found. One, is that, when I drop a stone from a high building, the sure outcome of that stone is that it will fall to the ground. The reason for this is the law of gravity. The stone will not go up the air unless I throw it upwards, but still the sure outcome is that it will still fall to the ground. Another one, is that, everyday I see the sun rising from the east and setting in the west. This is one sure outcome because the next day, I find the sun rising again in the east and setting in the west. This cycle will go on until God, the Creator, will change its course or stop it from rising or setting.

I know that some of you may also have observed some things in life that have sure outcomes. Like for example when a baby is born, you expect the baby to grow up into a toddler, a child, a teenager, and an adult. Barring any untoward circumstances, the baby will surely become an adult. Then there is the sure outcome that people in this world will be overtaken by death. Death will surely to come to anyone in life and when it comes to you, you cannot say no to death unless the Creator decides to let you live longer. Indeed, as we have seen, there are sure outcomes that are happening in this world and in life.

However, have you ever reflected about some sure outcomes in the Christian ministry or in missions? In the work of missions, we find that there is a sure outcome. In Psalm 67:6, 7, it says, “Then the land will yield its harvest, and God our God will bless. God will bless us and all the ends of the earth will fear him.” Fear in this verse does not mean “being afraid,” but rather it means “to revere” God. It is having reverence for God. It is also to venerate, or to worship or to be in awe. In one sense, it is to give glory to God. When God would bestow on us his blessings, then the sure outcome would be to glorify his name. One blessing that we have received is the blessing of salvation and because of this blessing, we can declare God’s glory.

Let us look at Isaiah 6:3, we find the latter portion of the verse saying, "...the whole earth is full of his glory." The context of this verse was at the time when Isaiah was in the temple and he saw a vision of God seated on the throne, high and exalted and the train of his robe filled the temple. Isaiah also saw seraphs and these seraph were declaring that "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Almighty, the whole earth is full of his glory." From Isaiah's experience, he already saw the glory of God saturating, filling and covering the world. We see in this instance a sure outcome of the whole earth being filled with the glory of God. Further, in Isaiah's experience the glory of God was disclosed to him. As one writer said, "...something of his glory can be seen if God is pleased to disclose it."

In Revelation 7:9-17, we find a vision of a great multitude. The great multitude came from every nation, tribe, people and language, standing before the throne and in front of the Lamb. The great multitude declared, "Salvation belongs to our God." This declaration is a declaration glorifying and honouring God for the salvation that he has given to those who were part of the great multitude. Not only were the great multitude giving glory to God, but also all the angels, the elders and the four living creatures, as they worshipped, they proclaimed, "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honour and power and strength be to our God forever and ever. Amen!" Just imagine all the angels, myriads of them. Thousands upon thousands upon thousands of angels declaring the glory of God. I believe that the voices of the angles, the elders, and the four living creatures, including that of the great multitude resounded and reverberated in the whole of heaven. I could imagine the voices echoing down the halls, the streets of gold and the pearly gates of heaven..."Praise and glory to the Lord."

Definitely, from the vision of the great multitude, missions and world evangelization took place. Without missions work and the proclamation of the gospel to all people groups of the earth there would be no great multitude. Perhaps, the Lord may utilize a different approach for the salvation of the peoples of the earth; however, he still used man to proclaim his excellencies. Because of missions we have the great multitude and the great multitude gave glory to God.

The above event shows that the sure outcome of missions is the glory of God. Missions must result in the glory of God.

Let me share some reasons we have for doing missions. One is obedience to the Great Commission. One of the reasons why the church is involved in missions is primarily that of obedience to the Great Commission. R. Keith Parks makes this observation, "it is without question a fact that from the first the New Testament ecclesia felt a divine obligation to be obedient to the Great Commission of our Lord Jesus Christ....Every Christian community is at its inception to be involved in obedience to the Great Commission." This statement by R. Keith Parks is the predominant sentiment especially that of the Evangelicals. In many of our gatherings, we emphasize the Great Commission, and we encourage our people to commit themselves to the work of missions out of a sense of obligation to the Great Commission. Our hymns on missions speak of the urgency of going into the world to preach the gospel. We have several of

these hymns and to mention a few we have, "To the Regions Beyond," "Go and Tell," "Send the Light," etc. There are many churches which are challenging their people to give and pray in obedience to the Great Commission. The question I want to ask is, is this the only and very reason why we are involved in cross-cultural missions? Please do not get me wrong in this because I believe in fulfilling the Great Commission as this was our Lord's last command. Many years ago, the U.S. C&MA came out with this slogan, "His last command, our first concern." It is indeed a slogan that is related to the Great Commission. Again, let me reiterate my question, should obedience to the Great Commission be our only motivation for missions?

Another reason for doing missions is the unreached and unsaved millions of peoples. This motivating factor that I see as the reason for involvement in missions is the teeming millions of people in the world that are lost. Christian missions, in this regard, was viewed in relation to the doctrines of salvation and the church and this gave rise to the fact that Christians were to "go" to the unsaved people and get them converted and bring them in fellowship in the church. This again is advocated by R. Keith Parks when he said, "Either implied or stated in each of the expressions of his (Jesus) commissioning is an emphasis on the salvation of the lost world." In the Epistle of Paul to the Romans, we find that in chapters 1-3, Paul is painting a picture of the wickedness, the lostness and total depravity of all mankind. He concludes by saying that "all have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." It is for this reason that Paul presents Christ as the one who will justify or make man righteous.

Again in our Alliance circle, we have a hymn by A. B. Simpson that portrays this motivation. The hymn is entitled, "A Missionary Cry." Here are some of the Lyrics:

A hundred thousand souls a day
Are passing one by one away
In Christless guilt and gloom;
Without one ray of hope or light,
With future dark as endless night,
They're passing to their doom,
They're passing to their doom.

Refrain

*They're passing, passing fast away
In thousands day by day;
They're passing to their doom,
They're passing to their doom.*

They're passing, passing, fast away,
A hundred thousand souls a day
In Christless guilt and gloom.
O Church of Christ, what wilt thou say
When, in the awful judgment day,

They charge thee with their doom,
They charge thee with their doom?

Refrain

The hymn indeed manifests the hundreds of thousands of people that are going to their doom without Christ. The situation of the world behooves the church to be involved in missions. It is with this urgency that the gospel must be preached to “the uttermost part of the earth.” We respond in love and compassion because many are going to eternal damnation without Christ in their lives. I ask the question then, Is this the only reason why we are into missions work?

Finally, the Glory of God as the ultimate reason for doing missions. The Westminster Catechism says, “The purpose of life is to glorify God and enjoy him.” This is the chief end of man. The Scriptures is replete with examples wherein mankind is commanded to give glory to God. Theologian Millard Erickson says, “Thus, for God to make his own glory the supreme objective is not in conflict with his command against self-centeredness. Indeed, making his glory the supreme objective actually fulfills the command....As the highest value in the universe, the source from which all else derives, God must choose his own glory ahead of all else.” In relation to the work of missions, the ultimate motivation is to bring glory to God.

I will not, however, disregard the other reasons for doing missions, but combine it here in this ultimate motivation. This means that when we do missions work because of obedience to the Great Commission, we do it to glorify God. Obedience to the Great Commission is not the end itself, but must lead to God’s glory. Again Millard Erickson comments, “The animate creation does so instinctively, responding to impulses within. Man alone is capable of obeying God consciously and willingly, and does glorify God most fully.” This is equally true with the motivation on the unsaved millions of people. We do missions work to the unsaved millions so that the unsaved millions will glorify God. Again, we should note that doing missions work to the unsaved millions must not be an end to itself but direct us to glorify God alone.

We want millions or even billions of people come to the saving knowledge of God so that they will bring glory, honour, majesty, dominion and power to the Most High God Himself and to Jesus Christ the redeemer of mankind.

I do hope that in some way or another this message will lead you to reflect on what you and your church are doing concerning missions and the glory of God. If our reasons for doing missions have been remiss and are not ultimately for the glory of God then we must realign what we have been doing for missions and make sure they are for the glory of God. Probably, we not only realign, but repent from what we have been doing if they have not led to the glory of God. Let us be reminded with what the Apostle Paul said in I Corinthians 10:31 where he says, “So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God.” The phrase, “whatever you do,” will also imply missions work. This means that our doing of missions must always have God’s glory in mind. I pray that we will be saved from the attitude of looking at ourselves in terms of doing missions because there can be tendencies of putting ourselves ahead of

God's glory. May the Lord help us to glorify His name as we do missions because his glory should be the purpose of everything that we do – including what we do in missions.