

Series: 6:8@Six:Eight	Reference: Various Passages	Title: Mission	Date: 10.21.18
<p style="text-align: center;">Website Writeup:</p> <p>Today we look at our mission statement; <i>to be the hands, feet, & voice of Jesus' on the Eastern Main Line & beyond - To manifest Jesus</i>. When we speak of 'manifesting Jesus' we're speaking in the language of the kingdom - demonstrating God's kingdom reign & power. In this sermon we explore what that looks like.</p>			

Color changes in text indicate slide changes

Todd Hall recently took me to see Jethro Tull at the Mann. Growing up, their song, *Skating Away on the Thin Ice of a New Day*, was significant to me. In that song it says...

And as you cross the wilderness, spinning in your emptiness: you feel you have to pray. Looking for a sign that the Universal Mind has written you into the Passion Play. Well, do you ever get the feeling that the story's too damn real & in the present tense? Or that everybody's on the stage, and it seems like you're the only person sitting in the audience?

As a young man, I felt I was skating on thin ice. Life felt uncertain. Little assurance. I was always on a spiritual journey, wondering about God, was I in the play, or just a spectator? We're going through this series of 6:8@Six:Eight about our core statements. We've addressed our purpose statement, to follow Jesus & our vision statement, to live as Jesus did. Today we want to look at our mission statement; *to be the hands, feet, & voice of Jesus' on the Eastern Main Line & beyond - To manifest Jesus*. These aren't statements which stand alone, they're interdependent.

You don't need to sit in the audience, God's written you into the Passion Play. You're not skating on thin ice, you're on solid foundation. You can be who you were meant to be, although that may not look like what you expected.

When we talk about manifesting Jesus, being His hands, feet & voice, we're speaking in Kingdom terms. The kingdom of God as a dynamic reality, now present in the world. God's sovereign rule, breaking in over all Creation, you can participate in. It includes the active role of the Spirit & Word addressing all the social/spiritual ills of the world. It acknowledges the tension of the spiritual battle we live in, as well as our own personal salvation & spiritual transformation. God's rule embraces all aspects of life, spiritual & physical; a holistic biblical reality going beyond just personal salvation. Since when we as God's children manifest Jesus, we manifest his Kingdom - we participate in ushering in His healing power.

Did you ever play a game like Monopoly with a hot-headed child? Halfway through the game the kid realizes they've lost, even though the game isn't over? What do they do? They get mad & overturn the game. They know the game isn't finished, but it is over. You've monopolized the board & now just slowing bleeding them dry as they go round & round the board as you take away all property. Methodically crushing their little hopes as they watch their monopoly money taken

away one dollar at a time. Competition's only fun when you're on the winning side of an unevenly matched game. Let's be honest, it's why we have kids, to feel better about ourselves.

God's Kingdom's come, but not fully come - playing monopoly with a child. The game's won, Satan's defeated. But it's not over, he's not yet destroyed. Faith life's living in the tension of what has already come, but will be fully established in the future. That explains to us why all who are evangelized aren't converted. Or, all the sick prayed for aren't healed. Or, why some are healed, but still get sick & die. It explains our triumph in Christ & our continued struggle in the flesh. If we break that tension, we're left with 2 options, God doesn't work miracles today - the position of cessation on one extreme. Or, on the other extreme, God always works miracles, if we have enough faith - the Prosperity Gospel. Remember Jesus is always in the middle of the extremes.

In Matt 10:7-8 Jesus urged his disciples, 'As you go, proclaim this message: 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.' Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse those who have leprosy, drive out demons. Freely you have received; freely give'.

And Paul notes, ...the end will come, when he (Jesus) hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. (1 Corinthians 15:22-25)

We're to live in the already/not yet tension, which Paul lived in, furthering the work of Jesus, manifesting Him to the world. *Paul said, ²⁴Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I am filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church¹* So, victory's won, yet the game continues. Paul's not saying Jesus' work on the cross wasn't enough, he's saying Jesus frees us to participate in ushering in God's kingdom rule now. There's still work to do; a Luke 4:18 work in which *the good news is preached to the poor, prisoners are set free, the blind receive their sight, and the oppressed are released.*

A friend of mine attended a small church growing up which only focused on the spiritual aspects of life; evangelism, conversion, sanctification, prayer & spiritual disciplines. This church had classes all the time on evangelism, but never anything was said about the poor, social justice, or the available power of the Holy Spirit. Yet when they went to a certain Christian school they found themselves in classes addressing poverty & social justice, but never a class on evangelism, or spiritual formation - a liberal theology, or the social gospel. Both had aspects of the Kingdom expressed in their theology, however both were incomplete. Six:Eight wants to walk away from this tendency towards selective obedience focusing on one extreme, or the other. Manifesting Jesus lies in the middle in balance & completeness.

We can see this selective obedience of going to spiritual extremes happening in various situations in the world. It happened with the churches involved with Apartheid in South Africa. Apartheid completely divided the witness of the church. Churches associated

¹ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Col 1:24). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.

with the South African Council of Churches almost succumbed to a neo-Marxist ideology in their swing towards a social gospel & liberal theology. The Evangelical, Pentecostal & Charismatic Churches refused to confront the system & withdrew into inner 'spirituality'. Eventually, the Rustenberg Confession became a cathartic moment where the whole church, left & right repudiated the system, confessed their own sin & committed themselves against the ideology & its socio-political agenda. Kingdom theology proved to be a wonderful source of sanity in a turbulent time.' (Derek Morphew). In other words they came back to the radical middle to be the true hands, voice & feet of Jesus in South Africa & healing occurred.

Martin Luther King said, "time itself is neutral; it can be used either destructively or constructively. More & more I feel that the people of ill will have used time much more effectively than have the people of good will. We will have to repent in this generation not merely for the hateful words & actions of the bad people but for the appalling silence of the good people. Human progress never rolls in on wheels of inevitability; it comes through the tireless efforts of men willing to be coworkers with God, and without this hard work, time itself becomes an ally of the forces of social stagnation. We must use time creatively, in the knowledge that the time is always ripe to do right." (p99)

He was addressing racism, but the sentiment's applicable across the board. Time is always ripe to do Kingdom - to be the hands, feet & voice of Jesus! "The kingdom of God isn't simply about having "Jesus in your heart" or having his Lordship "within you" (a popular definition based on Luke 17:21). Neither is the kingdom of God merely about the eternal rule of God 'up there' somewhere. The kingdom's an event which can be manifest now. It's about God coming in the moment when the powers of the coming age break into the present, in Jesus..." Jesus is the personified focus of this kingdom event. He ushered in the kingdom, demonstrated its power & enacted the kingdom through his death, resurrection & ascension.'² He invites us to participate in that Kingdom power.

Jesus rejects the extremes, and separation of personal & social ethics, or the physical & spiritual realm. When John the Baptist sent his delegation wondering if Jesus was 'the one' Jesus reply evoked the language of Isaiah. "Go back & report to John what you hear & see (now): The blind receive sight, the lame walk, those who have leprosy are cured, the deaf hear, the dead are raised, and the good news is preached to the poor. Blessed is the man who does not fall away on account of me" (Matthew 11:4-6). The kingdom had broken into our physical & social reality.

It's frightening to live the Kingdom life - it means reliance, tension & risk with the Holy Spirit. It means an overturning of our world view. Jesus says, don't fall away on account of me, because the Kingdom affects our lives, relationships & the world. It invites us into healing, breaking free & transformation. But 'we're not social activists, we're followers of Jesus' (Ron Sider). To follow Jesus means to reject a false spirituality which doesn't account for the reign of God breaking into all areas of life. To embrace not only the idea of personal salvation for the believer of sanctification, transformation & personal

² Derek Morphew, The Kingdom: Healing the Dualism of Personal & Social Ethics

holiness, but also the holistic thought of the beatitudes as a way of life, of combatting injustice, of loving our environment & of caring for the poor. It's God's Kingdom come now, as a very real thing. It's finishing the Monopoly game even when Satan tries to overturn the board. It's looking past all your own stuff & starting to minister in the power of the Holy Spirit to those right around you in real & practical ways. **It's partnering with God in his Divine Mission - the restoration of God's rule over all creation. It's paying attention to what you say you pay attention to...those right in front of you (expound). It's not just going to church, it's being the Church. It's not just saying I follow Jesus, but actually following Jesus in obedience. Allowing, not your culture, to define your morality, but His Word. Allowing him to lead you to places you may not want to go internally & in the world.**

Matthew 12:28-29 reveals some essential qualities of manifesting Jesus/kingdom: *²⁸But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you. ²⁹Or again, how can anyone enter a strong man's house and carry off his possessions unless he first ties up the strong man? Then he can rob his house.*

There are six dimensions of the Kingdom in these two verses³. Firstly, we see God as Ruler & Rescuer - before God can rule & reign he must rescue; Satan must be deposed. The expulsion of demonic forces & the binding of Satan are all signs the Kingdom of God has broken in via the person of Jesus Christ. Satan's defeated at the Cross (Colossians 2:15), and forever destroyed at the second coming of Christ (Rev 19:11-20:10).

There are Present & Future dimensions. Matthew 12 reveals to us there are present aspects of the Kingdom shown now, demonic powers are driven back; yet Scripture drives us to the understanding, there's a fulfillment of the Kingdom of God coming in the future (Gn 3:15; Nm 14:21; Is 11:2-9; 65:17-25; 2 Pt 3:13-31; Rv 21:1-7). Therefore, we can experience it now amidst the tension & suffering of the battle we're engaged in while holding onto hope for the future (Mt 5:10-12; Ac 14:22; Phil 1:29, 2 Tim 3:12).

And lastly, there are Physical & Spiritual dimensions. When Satan's deposed & sin's dealt with, sickness is often cured (Acts 10:38; Luke 10:17-18; Luke 13:11). Jesus & his followers advanced the Kingdom of God by pushing back the Kingdom of Satan both physically & spiritually, since we can't separate physical life from spiritual life.

Most evangelicals talk a lot about a personal savior, being saved & being born again, but they skip over the Kingdom of God, which is the overriding theme to the Scriptures. Rather than talking more of the rule of God, our emphasis tends to be on reconciliation with God - biblical, but incomplete. Everything Jesus did centered on the Kingdom (Mk 1:14, 15; Mt 6:9-13; Lk 17:21). The Kingdom was the subject of his sermons, the point of his parables & the meaning of his miracles (Mt 5-7; 11:1-5; 12:28,29; 13:1-52; Mk 4).

Our emphasis has been on the relational dimension of the Kingdom - we stress our personal relationship with God, forgiveness & fellowship with him, which is all good & soundly biblical, just incomplete. **Jesus not only came to save us, but also to destroy the**

³ Rick Love in his book, *Muslims, Magic, and the Kingdom of God* [pp41-42]

works of Satan (1 Jn 3:8). Jesus has defeated Satan & ushered the Kingdom into our physical reality (Mt 12:28; Acts 10:38; Eph 1:20-21; Col 1:12-14; 2:15; Heb 2:14, 1 Pt 3:21-22), which allows us to view life through a holistic lens, giving us the tools to do battle in the midst of our current tension.

This means we can't deny the presence of Evil, or Satan in the world. In doing so, we hamstring our faith. Spirituality loses all power, given we deny the spiritual powers of darkness in the world which Scripture calls us to struggle against. This also comes out in moral ways when we believe we can define our own morality instead of God.

Scripture isn't anti-intellectual, but there's a guard against the debilitating pride of intellectualism. Since in it, the spiritual life becomes mere psychology, all about our own intellectual effort to cure our faulty heart - which Scripture says is an impossibility. The reality of evil & sin allow us to see ourselves & others through Christ's eyes. People are no longer intrinsically evil. Our anger's no longer misdirected at them since we see them as prisoners of sin nature & victims of evil which exploits that nature. Which leads them away from God, freedom, life & healthy community which expresses his kingdom.

Therefore, we must preach the good news - Jesus came to destroy the works of Satan (Truth Encounter). Confront the powers through prayer & healing (Power Encounter). Model the values of the Kingdom (Moral Encounter). Express the reality of the Kingdom through culturally relevant rituals (Cultural Encounter).⁴

Manifesting Jesus calls us to engage in issues of poverty, aide, social justice, & combatting human trafficking - sexy popular issues. Yet in that, the temptation is to forget...God calls us to live this out in our personal walks & with our neighbor, those right before us. To engage them 4 dimensionally: intellectually, emotionally, spiritually & behaviorally. To have a powerful healing & prayer ministry towards people. To see the kingdom break into our reality, realizing their are other forces at work in this world we can't see. **None of us will do ministry someplace else if we don't do it here - you are the hands, feet & voice of Jesus wherever you are. There should be a healthy humility & balance between understanding our personal salvation & sanctification process, as well as engaging in the issues which are on God's heart. Not one of these things takes priority over the other, they're practiced in the radical middle in mature balance.**

So, what does it mean to manifest Jesus? It's simple, practical & scary at the same time. Remember a few things today.

1. Jesus is more than just personal salvation.
2. He invites you into kingdom ministry (4 dimensionally; intellectually, emotionally, spiritually & behaviorally), you can participate in the defeat of Satan & his works.
3. Pay attention to what you say you pay attention to (integrity - you're not just who you say you are - who you are is intimately tied with what you do, remember listening + following = obedience).

⁴ Rick Love p16-17.

4. Prayer in the Spirit is your ultimate power. You can manifest Jesus by asking others one question, “Can I pray for you, right now?”
5. Familiarity breeds contempt - push through the feeling that this is just rote.
6. Freedom to make mistakes

Asking others the question, ‘Can I pray with you, right now?’ says we believe God’s active in our reality; that we don’t live in a dualism of physical & spiritual realities. That He’s willing & able to break through with power to heal & to help us now. We partner with God in seeing his kingdom come now; to heal, to defeat Satan, to save & overthrow the works of evil in this world. *That’s why Jesus said, ⁸But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.⁵* Like raindrops on a calm lake, our circles of influence emanate outward overlapping - as we reach our Jerusalem. In the process God calls some farther out into the world cross-culturally as ‘missionaries’.

Every time you’re in conversation with someone & they express a struggle, or joy, ask them, “Can I pray for you, right now?” Then do it. Invite the Holy Spirit to come - the Kingdom of God will break through & you’ll be a part of something special - our vision will flourish as we co-labor with God.

You’re not in the audience, you’re on the stage. God’s written you into the Passion Play. You’re not skating on thin ice, you’re on solid foundation. You can be who you were meant to be in Jesus if you’ll co-labor with Him. Because God’s in an uneven matched game of monopoly with Satan, the game’s moving towards Satan’s destruction & the fulfillment of God’s kingdom reign.

⁵ *The Holy Bible: English Standard Version*. 2001 (Ac 1:8). Wheaton: Standard Bible Society.