



-- Video – Christmas Linebacker

That video is, of course, absurd. However, it does sort of direct our attention to a central element of any attitude that can properly be called “Christmas spirit,” for, as we began to discuss last week, a Christmas mindset inspires a Christmas mission. In other words, Scripture clearly teaches us that because Jesus came, we must go. Indeed, the thrust of the message this morning is to emphasize that a genuinely Christlike and biblically informed Christmas spirit is one that will joyfully “Go and tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born!”

-- Read Luke 4:42-44

-- Pray

It is my Christmas prayer that, both as individuals and as a congregation, we will grow in a lifestyle consistently characterized by the heavenly proclamation that comprises the title of that wonderful Christmas carol—“Go! Tell It on the Mountain.” If we are to do so, we must understand three central truths about our calling in Christ. Last week, we examined the first of these three truths, which is the fact that...

1.) We are made for a mission...

This mission for which we have been made is a marvelous mission. It calls us to stop living for puny personal glory and urges us to start living by God’s grace and for God’s glory. We looked at the mission-minded motivation of Christ that is remarkably revealed in verse 43, where He declares “*I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.*” Here, Jesus declares, in no uncertain terms, that proclamation of the Good News of the kingdom of God is a crucial component of the mission that motivated His ministry on earth. And this mission is now our mission because, as believers in Jesus Christ, we are called to preach the Good News to those who have not heard. You and I have been made for a mission, and that mission is to introduce people to God. As the Apostle Paul declares in 2 Corinthians 5:20 – “*We are ambassadors*

for Christ, God making his appeal through us.” Christ calls us not only to come unto Him but to go out for Him.

Last week, we also introduced a second aspect of a proper response to the Christmas message, which is this: Not only are we made for a mission, but...

2.) We are redeemed to reach out.

As we examined our two verses from Luke chapter four, it became clear that Jesus was not content to limit the Good News to the people of Capernaum who had already seen Him and heard it. Christ's example here shows us that fullness of Christian living comes not only in receiving Him through faith, but also in reaching out and sharing that faith with others. We read this same in Philemon 1:6, in which Paul says, *“I pray that you may be active in sharing your faith, so that you will have a full understanding of every good thing we have in Christ.”* When it comes to the Gospel, we have not been redeemed to recoil; we have not been restored or retreat. No, we have been redeemed to reach out!

Therefore, if we are to be a congregation that understands our calling from Christ to reach out, then we must “look beyond” in at least two important ways. First, as we examined last week...

a.) Reaching out requires us to look beyond ourselves.

Reaching out in Christ compels us to look beyond ourselves because the type of reaching out that Christ displayed Himself, and now demands of us, requires faithful engagement in personal evangelism, and reaching out in personal evangelism involves a type self-denial that does not come to us naturally. Thus, unless we sincerely strive to look beyond ourselves, selfishness and worldly desires will all too quickly muzzle our mission. By surveying Luke 4:32-42, we saw how Jesus overcame the temptation to remain in Capernaum, where life was easy, in order to persevere in His mission to share the Good News with the other towns as well. To reach out as Christ did, then, we must overcome a world full of temptations that incite us do otherwise. We must maintain the same steadfast focus upon our mission as Christ maintained upon His.

That brings up to speed and leads us to the second way in which reaching out calls to look beyond. Not only does reaching our in Christ involve looking beyond ourselves, but...

b.) Reaching out involves looking beyond our borders.

Our God is a big God, indeed. He is the one and only God of that exists, and from the very moment of its Creation, God has had a passion for the hearts of people. As Jesus reveals to Nicodemus in John 3:16, saying, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life.”* // From the very beginning, when God first created Adam and Eve, He has desired companionship with men and women from every tribe and nation. In Acts 17:26-27, Luke writes, *“From one man he created all the nations throughout the whole earth. He decided beforehand which should rise and fall, and he determined their boundaries. His purpose in all of this was that the nations should seek after God and perhaps feel their way toward him and find him - though he is not far from any one of us.”*

Our God has revealed Himself to be global God, and His perfect love spills transcends every geographical line. Yet, when it comes to looking and loving beyond borders, we Christians sometimes seem to be lagging behind the times. Just pause for a moment to consider the vast globalization of our world today. I am continually amazed at the degree to which our lives are intertwined with people in distant nations. Countless elements of daily living and culture, such as entertainment, fashion, music, sports, and even fast food are now global enterprises. Most of our largest corporations and media conglomerates are multinational. Chances are good that most of the clothing that you and I are wearing today was produced in a myriad of foreign countries. And did you know that you can find a McDonald’s restaurant in no less than 61 countries, including nations such as Uruguay, Cyprus, and Qatar? The point is this: We are more globally connected than we probably realize.

Because of this, I suggest that we live in an exciting moment in history. Not only are there more Christians on earth than ever before, but there is more opportunity to access more people in more places than ever before. The Apostle Paul was surely right when in Colossians 1:6 he said, *“This same Good News that came to you is going out all over the world. It is changing lives everywhere, just as it changed yours that very first day you heard and understood the truth about God’s great kindness to sinners.”* Our God is a global God. Therefore, as His people, we must be globally-minded people who understand the necessity to look beyond our borders.

Having said that, the question then comes: What does this mean? How do we look beyond our own borders for God’s glory?

i.) First, I suggest that looking beyond our borders means praying for missions around the world. If we are to be world-class Christians, then we must be a class of Christians who pray for the world. Therefore, reaching out in a global sense can begin by simply picking up a map and praying for specific countries by name, for of all of the tools that God has given us for our mission, prayer is among the most important. // While the people whom we hope to reach may refuse our ministry and while they may reject our message, they are defenseless against our prayers.

--Pin-point bombing and laser-guided missiles.

-- In much the same way, the prayers of Christians focus the attention of the spiritual powers on high.

-- Like this pin-point bombing, we can aim our prayers directly at another's heart, whether we are ten feet apart or 10,000 miles away,

-- With this in mind, the Bible teaches us to look beyond our borders by praying in the following ways:

a.) Pray for opportunities to witness.

-- Colossians 4:3 – *And pray for us, too, that God may open a door for our message, so that we may proclaim the mystery of Christ.*

b.) Pray for courage to speak up.

-- Ephesians 6:19 – *Pray also for me, that whenever I open my mouth, words may be given me so that I will fearlessly make known the mystery of the gospel.*

c.) Pray that the lost will come to belief in Christ

-- 1 Timothy 2:1, 2-4 – *I urge, then, first of all, that requests, prayers, intercession and thanksgiving be made for everyone... This is good, and pleases God our Savior, who wants all men to be saved and to come to a knowledge of the truth.*

d.) Pray for those who will come to believe.

-- John 17:20-21 – *“I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father—that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me.”*

e.) Pray for more workers to spread the Good News.

-- Matthew 9:38 – *“Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”*

f.) Pray for Christian missionaries, both here and abroad.

-- In 2 Corinthians 1:11, Paul told his prayer partners, *“You are also joining to help us when you pray for us.”*

- Pray that God will send faithful and effective missionaries to preach and minister among the people groups whom God lays upon your heart.
- Use the “Prayers for Missionaries” page in the prayer journals.

g.) Pray for the rapid spread of the Gospel.

- 2 Thessalonians – *Finally, brothers, pray for us that the message of the Lord may spread rapidly and be honored, just as it was with you.*

ii.) Besides global prayer, another way we can look beyond our borders is to train ourselves to examine world events through “Great Commission eyes.” Look and listen for places where there is conflict, persecution, or rapid change. We can be sure that those are places where God is working and where our prayers should be aimed, for if Christian history teaches us anything about the Christian faith, it teaches us that God uses such events to draw people to Himself. People are and have always been most receptive to the Gospel when they are under tension or in transition.

iii.) With all that said, however, surely the best way to look beyond our borders is to go beyond our borders. Do you desire Great Commission eyes that are connected to a Great Commission heart? The best place to develop these essential Christian attributes is in a Great Commission setting. I don’t imagine that there will ever be an adequate substitute for actual hands-on, real-life experience in another culture. Thus, let us not be those who merely study about the mission for which God has made us; let us get out and do it!

With that thought in mind, listen to the model for our mission that Jesus gives us in Acts 1:8. He says, “*You will receive power when the Holy Spirit comes on you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.*” Let us take careful note of the simultaneous layers of reaching out that Jesus is commanding in this verse:

- 1.) His disciples were charged to reach out to their immediate community of Jerusalem.
 - We too must reach out to our immediate community of White County.
 - Extending invitations, sharing the Gospel, meeting community needs
- 2.) They were instructed to reach out to their country—that is Judea.
 - We too must reach out to unbelievers across our own great nation.
 - As Southern Baptists we are blessed to participate in national missions through NAMB (the North American Missions Board).
- 3.) They were directed to reach out to other cultures (Samaria).
 - Though very near to Jerusalem in distance, Samaria was quite distant in its culture.

- We too are called to reach out to those who live near us but whose culture may be quite different.
 - Women's ministry at the East St. Louis Mission.
 - Mike and others reaching out to the Hispanic culture centered at Tequilas
- 4.) They were commanded to reach out to people "to the ends of the earth."
- We too must be involved in global missions.
 - Youth to Ecuador, Men's ministry to Mexico, Niece and Amy to France
 - IMB (International Mission Board)
 - Lottie Moon Christmas Offering

I am delighted that the Lottie Moon offering for global missions comes to our attention as Southern Baptists every Christmas season, because, as I pray you have come to agree, a proper response to the Christmas message most certainly involves a passion to spread the Good News about the coming of Jesus Christ around the world. True Christmas spirit echoes the zeal Jesus reveals when He says, "*I must preach the good news of the kingdom of God to the other towns also, because that is why I was sent.*" Just as we have seen in Jesus and as we see in His Apostles, reaching out means looking beyond our borders and preaching the Good News to those who have not heard.

The application of this message this morning is straightforward: Let us get involved in missions! We can do this by praying for missionaries and the people groups they are reaching. We can do this by looking at the world through "Great Commission eyes." We can and should be giving to missions. Indeed, this month ushers in an excellent opportunity to do so through Lottie Moon Christmas offering. And, of course, a most excellent way to look beyond our borders is to jump into the deep end and go on a short-term missions trip!

Listen to this testimony about the positive effects of participating in missions by Rick Warren. About mission work, he says, "It will enlarge your heart, expand your vision, stretch your faith, deepen your compassion, and fill you with a kind of joy you have never experienced. It could be the turning point in your life." Ask those in our church who have participated in mission trips. I am certain that they will gladly echo Warren's thoughts about the profound difference that a Great Commission experience will make in your life.

Therefore, find a mission trip, and make the sacrifices necessary to participate. Let us all set goals to involve ourselves in a mission project aimed at each of the four target areas set forth by Jesus in Acts 1:8. We will be glad we did and, by God's grace, we will greatly grow in the grace we have received to reach out and look beyond our borders for God's glory.

In conclusion, I suggest to you once again that our response to Christmas ought to be like that of the shepherds on the very first Christmas night. In Luke 2:16-18, we see in them the type of Christmas spirit that we are remarkably blessed to emulate: *“So they hurried off and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby, who was lying in the manger. When they had seen him, they spread the word concerning what had been told them about this child, and all who heard it were amazed at what the shepherds said to them.”* These shepherds saw the glory of the Son of God and were immediately motivated by a magnificent mission. They rushed forth to reach out, they reached out to speak up, and they spoke up to introduce everyone they met to the glory of the Christ child. And those who heard them were amazed. Let us like those shepherds “Go and tell it on the mountain that Jesus Christ is born.”

-- Psalm 67:1-7 – *May God be merciful and bless us. May his face shine with favor upon us. May your ways be known throughout the earth, your saving power among people everywhere. May the nations praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you. How glad the nations will be, singing for joy, because you govern them with justice and direct the actions of the whole world. May the nations praise you, O God. Yes, may all the nations praise you. Then the earth will yield its harvests, and God, our God, will richly bless us. Yes, God will bless us, and people all over the world will fear him.*