

Following A Mission Statement

Preached by Phil Kayser at DCC on 2021-12-19

As we think this week about the birth of Christ, I want to deal with one facet of His Incarnation - that Jesus came into the world with a clearly defined mission that drove every aspect of His life. And this mission statement was planned out long before the world was even made. Before there was a world, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit were in holy covenant with each other. And that covenant had a detailed plan - what theologians call the eternal decrees of God. Every facet of this world's history was planned out before there was a world. And our redemption was planned out before there was a world. Ephesians 1:4 says that the Father "chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before Him in love." Titus 1:2 says that the Father made a promise to Jesus before time began, and that promise involved the salvation of you and me. But at the heart of this comprehensive plan was a purpose and a mission statement from which everything else flowed, including His incarnation, life, death, resurrection, ascension, reign, and consumation of history.

When you are driven by a plan it energizes you. And over and over Jesus spoke of doing His Father's plan and of a divine necessity for what He did. Now, obviously we will never be able to map out our future like the Father mapped out Jesus' future. We will never be able to have a perfect mission statement like Jesus articulated His to be in several places. But this verse that we will look at shows that there is some faint way in which *we must imitate Jesus in having a mission statement for our lives*. Where do I get that idea from? Let's read verse 18 again:

Verse 18 says, "As You sent Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." And the Greek is a bit stronger. It is, **Just** as you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world." In John 20 Jesus says the same thing. He said, "As the Father has sent Me, I am also sending you." So this morning I want to compare the Father's mission for sending Christ into the world with the Father's mission for us. I have three main points:

- I. The Father's mission - sent with a purpose
- II. The opposition to the Father's mission - "the world"
- III. The Father's resources for the mission - "Just as You have sent Me...I have sent them."

The Father's mission - sent with a purpose (v. 18 in context)

Do you have a clear understanding of your mission statement? (cf. v. 4)

If we have been sent just as Christ was sent, my first question would be, "For what purpose have I been sent?" Do I too have a mission? In verse 4 Jesus said, "I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do."

If you don't have a strong sense of God's call upon your life, you wouldn't even know if you had finished the work that God had given you to do on any given day, let alone at the end of your life. But verse 4 shows that Jesus knew His mission clearly, and it was so concrete that He knew that He had accomplished it. And since Jesus sends us in exactly the same way that the Father sent Him, Jesus wants us to have a sense of purpose and mission in life. For each of us that will look somewhat different.

It has been popular in some circles to write a missions statement of what *you* want to be and do. But a Christian mission statement should be seeking to find out what the *Father* wants me to be and to do. We shouldn't be *inventing* our mission; we should be *discovering* it. In fact, throughout our lives we will probably need to be fine tuning our mission statements to more and more reflect what God has sent us to do. Obviously all of us are sinners, so none of us will be able to say what Jesus said in verse 4. But we should long for that to be more and more true of us.

This is a chart that I developed several decades ago. I prayed and sweated over it for many months. It is a summary of one of the most significant exercises any of my upward mentors has taken me through. Based on the promise of Romans 8:28 - that all things work together for our good and His glory, my mentor took me on a several month exercise of discovering God's calling upon my life. It involved examining all the influences for good and for bad in my life as far back as I could remember, labeling those influences as either integrity checks, Word checks, divine contacts, Faith challenges, Destiny guidance, negative preparation, Life crisis, Ministry conflict, leadership backlash, or isolation. And each of those events (without my even realizing it) had already been used by God to instill values into me (the bottom side of this chart) and to gradually form me to be the kind of leader He was preparing me to be. And you will see that this whole chart is shaped like an arrow being shot into the darkness of the world. The black column over here are all of the things contrary to God's will that God has burdened me to influence, change, challenge, or make a difference in. Those are the things that make me weep, agonize in prayer, and that God is driving me to change. But the tip of the arrow is my mission statement that God has been crafting into my life. Yours will be different than mine.

But let me read my purpose statement, then my vision statement, and then my mission statement that has been the driving goal in my life. And I am reading it because it might give a bit of an idea of what a mission statement can look like as you craft your own in the new year. And I hope some of you do. Like I said, it was probably the most useful and life transforming exercise that I have been through.

My purpose statement is very brief. It is "To glorify God in every area of life, to enjoy Him fully in all that I am and do, and to be used by God in bringing others to do the same by God's grace." It's a pretty general purpose statement.

My vision statement gives a little bit more flesh. It is "To live in the reality of God's authority, presence and power so fully that every facet of my leadership, teaching, hospitality, evangelism and other service is done with joy, out of deep devotion and love to God and in a way that brings glory to Him alone, and that promotes not only the well being of my family, but (within the realm of influence that God allows) the well being of the whole

bride of Christ and the nations which are destined to become disciples of Christ.” That has a bit more specificity, and is unique to me. And I thank you for freeing up some of my time to minister outside of the church as a reformer. It is a part of my calling.

My mission statement (also unique to me) says,

I want to live out my callings as husband, father, pastor, writer, teacher and reformer with a constant dependence upon God’s authority, presence and power and with an eye to pleasing Him rather than man. I want every facet of my ministry to be characterized by the overflow of the Spirit’s power. I want to know Jesus and the power of His resurrection in all that I am and do.

I want to model what it means to love and lead my family in the Lord. I want to enable my whole family to feel that they share in my ministry and to find satisfaction in the sacrifices that they make. I want to prepare my children to find God’s purpose for their own lives. I want my wife and I to provide an inheritance of spiritual values, skills and resources that will enable them to stand on our shoulders and go beyond what we will be able to achieve in our life times. I desire to pass on a heritage to my children’s children.

I also dedicate myself to extending the kingdom of God through the local church in outreach, discipleship, teaching, writing and equipping the saints for the work of the ministry. Beyond the work of the local church, God has also given me a burning passion to pray and work towards seeing the whole bride of Jesus Christ strengthened, united and better resourced for the culture-transforming work of discipling the nations (Matthew 28). When God brings such revival upon the world that nations (as nations) are discipled, I want to be used by God to help in the process of teaching them to observe God’s biblical blueprints (Matt. 28:18-20).

Now, that’s unique to me, and it captures the particular way in which I believe God has sent me into this world. But I would urge you to think about what mission God has for you from the moment that He brought you into the world and even before. After the service you can flip through this resource by Terry Walling that can take you step-by-step through the same process I went through- the process of understanding God’s call upon your life and what He has been preparing you to be and do from the time you were born. It’s called Perspective Time Line.¹ You were conceived and brought up for a purpose, and it is not a selfish purpose. It is a purpose of glorifying God. If you are a homeschooled child, your schedule might look different from mine. If you are a stay-at-home mom, your schedule of activities might look different than mine. But there is probably some overlap in the areas of your deepest passions. And to get at some of those passions that should be common to us, let’s look at some of the verses in this chapter and see if they might give you some hints of how your own mission statement might need to be tweaked.

Learning from Christ’s mission statement (vv. 1-26)

Verse 1:

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: “Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You,”

¹ https://smile.amazon.com/Perspective-Creating-Time-line-Breakthru-Development/dp/1517360382/ref=sr_1_1?keywords=%22Perspective+Time+Line%22&qid=1639409314&sr=8-1

Christ had a passion to glorify the Father in all that He did. And as we approach the beginning of a new year, it is worth asking if your mission statement needs to be tweaked so that the way it highlights (or glorifies) your calling glorifies the Father. Jesus worded it this way in Matthew 5:16: “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” He is not denying that you have glory or that you have light, but He is saying that you need to make sure that your work is done in such a way that your light is seen to originate in God and glorifies God. “Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven.” That is one way in which we could parallel Christ in verse 1.

Look at verse 2:

as You have given Him authority over all flesh, that He should give eternal life to as many as You have given Him.

We don't have comprehensive authority over all flesh like Jesus did, but we do have delegated authority just as Jesus did. Does our exercise of authority over our body, over our resources, over our family, etc., always recognize the fact that it flows from the Father, through Jesus, and sometimes through human authority? Christ had authority because He was under authority. Our mission statements are all going to look different from each other's just like Jesus' did, but that does not mean there are not common features that we can learn from His. And that's true even of this verse. Is our authority delegated and under authority?

And secondly, is our exercise of authority for the purpose of giving life and benefiting others, or is it a selfish exercise of authority? It's a good question to ask when we consider mission. We have a stewardship trust of people and things, and we are accountable to the Father for exercising it for His glory and for the best interests of those given to us.

Look at verse 3:

And this is eternal life, that they may know You, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom You have sent.

Throughout this prayer Gary has been showing us that one of the Father's purposes is that we might learn to know the Father and the Son and help others to know the Father and the Son. Intimacy with God doesn't just happen. It must be planned, and Jesus had a plan that dovetailed with the Father's plan to help others to know that same intimacy. Does your mission statement include a passion for knowing God? It should. And has that part of your mission statement made it into your schedule? If it hasn't, it is just theoretical. Paul said that his life goal was, “that I might know Him and the power of His resurrection...” (Phil. 3:10).

Look at verse 4. I already read this once, but it bears reading again:

I have glorified You on the earth. I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.

And don't think of the work the Father gave to Jesus as only involving preaching. Luke 2:40 indicates that it involved handling the issues of toddlerhood and young childhood with grace and wisdom. Jesus is a model to you children on how to glorify God. Luke 2:51 indicates that Jesus pleased the Father by the way He submitted to his earthly parents as a teenager. Are you teenagers imitating Jesus? Even if you have not yet solidified what your

mission for life might be (which is very likely), you can certainly know your mission to serve God with your teenage responsibilities. Learning carpentry and doing it to God's glory was a part of Jesus's work until He was thirty years old. Most of His life was spent in carpentry, showing that there is no such thing as secular callings. His carpentry was part of the Father's mission, and how He engaged in carpentry showed that He did it with a single-eyed purpose of pleasing His Father. He did fantastic carpentry in part because He did it to please God the Father. Caring for His mother in her old age was a part of the work that the Father gave to Him. It was part of why He was sent into this world - to be a model child, teen, carpenter, preacher, family man, custodian of a dependent parent, etc. He glorified the Father in all of those things as well as in worship, preaching, leadership training, and evangelism. Both Colossians and Ephesians say that even the boring manual labor of a slave can serve Christ and glorify the Father if it is done rightly. Our mission statement need not be pietistic in order to glorify God. In fact, I would say that if it is pietistic, I can guarantee you that it doesn't fully line up with God's mission for you - which includes your money, job, body, and how you eat. I know those things are a part of God's mission for you. We must have a sense of mission in all that we do. Another way of saying it is that we must be missional in all that we do. Even the giving of a cup of cold water to our children should be done as service to the Father. Do it with mission. None of us will be able to say that we have perfectly finished the work which God has given us to do, but that should be our longing. It was certainly the apostle Paul's longing.

Moving on, let's look at verse 6:

"I have manifested Your name to the men whom You have given Me out of the world. They were Yours, You gave them to Me, and they have kept Your word.

That's an amazing statement! Gary pointed out in the past that you are a gift that the Father gave to Jesus. It not only speaks of you being the property of Father and Son, but you being precious to Father and Son. J. C. Ryle says, "It is an unspeakable comfort to remember that Christ cares for that which the Father has given him."

And the flip side of the coin is that we care for the Father and the Son - we keep His word; we express our love to them. We have a stewardship of our relationship with God.

But there is also a sense in which God gives people to you just as the Father gave people to Jesus. For an elder or deacon it might involve a lot of people. For a parent it might involve a spouse and children. For the children it might involve the parents that God has given. How do you relate to those people? Is it selfishly, or do you handle them as a precious gift from the Father? The Father takes it personally how you handle His gifts. Are you God-centered in how your mission statement speaks about the people around you?

Look at verse 7:

Now they have known that all things which You have given Me are from You.

This speaks of stewardship of knowledge and passing on knowledge. How are you about receiving knowledge from the Father and passing on knowledge from the Father? The teenage son of Joseph and Mary took it so seriously that the scholars of his day learned from him. We adults can learn from you kids if you take this stewardship of knowledge

seriously. Even if we know much more than you, the Lord may have given *you* an insight that He has *not* given to us. And we parents need to have the humility to learn from our children. That should be a part of your mission statement. Look at verse 8:

For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me.

I'm not going to go through every verse. I've gone through enough so that you can get an idea of how to do it yourself. But if you do so prayerfully on your own, you will find that Jesus was an incredible model of what it means to live by the mission that the Father has given. He did not invent His own mission; He received His mission from the Father and He fully lived it out. Well, if Jesus did not invent His mission, neither should we.

In verse 9 the Father's mission involves passionate prayer. In verse 10 it involves commitment to community. In verse 11 it involves a radical antithesis from the world and a passionate desire for holiness. In verse 12 it involves looking to the welfare of others and being grieved when they fall. In verse 13 it involves joy - a supernatural joy that flows from Father, to Son, and by the Holy Spirit into our lives. If you continue to read verse by verse through this whole chapter you will see that from the time Jesus was conceived in the womb of Mary to the time of this prayer, He was driven by the Father's mission. Everything He did had purpose and meaning - even the babyhood, and the school years, and the carpentry. How do we put the Father back into Christmas and back into every moment of our lives? We do so by living out a mission statement that reflects the Father's heart for each us.

The opposition to the Father's mission - "the world" (v. 18 in context)

But verse 18 also implies opposition to the Father's mission. It is seen in the word, "world." But that opposition is made crystal clear in many other verses as well. Verses 14-15 say,

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one.

There is the opposition. Christ received resistance from Satan and the world from His first Christmas and on. There was no room for Christ in the inn. And as soon as He was born, Herod sought to kill him. But Christ wants us to know upfront that we will receive resistance too, and He warns us not to try to escape from the world just because we find pain in the world. *Our goal is not self-preservation, but a preservation of the mission.* Let me repeat that. Our goal is not self-preservation, but a preservation of the mission; a living out of the mission of the Father. We have been sent here with a purpose, and that purpose includes being conquerors through Christ. Just before this prayer, in chapter 16:33 Jesus said, "In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." And He sends us into the world with that confidence.

When I was trained how to discern God's call upon my life, the pastor who was training me had me write down every significant event, or person, or failure, or success, or book, or anything else that had influenced me or formed me, whether for the good or for the bad. As

those thoughts came to me over a period of weeks, I wrote them down on sticky notes that went up onto a white board, where they got organized chronologically, where patterns began to emerge. Some of the things I wrote down were very painful. Some were joyful. And interestingly, every time it was God's timing to move me into the next stage of my development, He pushed me out of my comfort zone with pain. I wouldn't have moved otherwise. And this has been the testimony of thousands of people who have gone through this exercise. Some of the pain in my life involved people who had been cruel and abusive to me. Others were people who had a profoundly helpful influence in my life. And based on Romans 8:28 (that all things work together for our good) this pastor had me process why God had allowed these things in my life. He didn't let me move on until I could figure out why. What values had both the good and the bad instilled into me? And I could see the patterns emerging. It was like God had been crafting me. It was exciting. I could see that God had a purpose for even the painful events.

In fact, I was staggered to see for the first time in my life that even the horrible experiences of abuse during certain parts of my youth were tailor made by God to prepare me to be the kind of leader that I am. God used even the opposition of the world and of Satan to form me and prepare me. They were just tools in God's hands. It helped me to be thankful for those things. For one thing, those negative experiences gave me insight and sensitivity to people going through similar struggles. And those experiences also gave me burdens and focus on the kinds of things in this world that God wanted me to impact.

If you examine the dark column on the right side of this page that the tip of the arrow is piercing, it represents the darkness. God has sent me into the darkness of the world for a purpose. And I can see crystal clearly which things that are in the world that God wants me to keep praying against, writing against, and seeking to influence.

Now, I will hasten to say that this chart represents my unique calling and my unique mission. You can't just copy it as your own. You have to discover your own. Even the things in this right hand dark column of the world that I have listed may not be that important to you because God's calling may be different in your life. But these are the things that make me weep in the night watches, and make me burdened, and make me work, and write, and pray. And yes, sometimes these things represent resistance to my call because there is backlash. You can't pierce the world as an arrow without getting backlash. Jesus guarantees that the world over here will hate us because it hated Jesus. But because I have a sense of the mission for which God has sent me into the world, these bad things in this last column actually energize me; they don't take me down; they don't discourage me. They are part of what God made me for. Why would I give up simply because there is resistance from the world? No - it is for this purpose that God has sent me into the world. And I believe He has a unique and important calling for each of you.

So the Father's role in the Christmas story reminds me that just as the Father sent the Son into a world of opposition that desperately needs changing, He has sent me into a world that hates Him and that desperately needs changing. Your call may be to change what is wrong with your toddlers and to bring them to Christ. Your call may be to influence your neighbors or to leverage your work for the kingdom. But it is guaranteed that all of us will have the world, the flesh, and the devil resisting our mission to some degree. And if we look

to what Jesus has provided and what the Holy Spirit empowers we will face those things with faith, hope, and love, and not with despair. So we have seen that we have a mission just like Jesus had a mission, and we have opposition just as Jesus had opposition.

The Father's resources for the mission - "Just as You have sent Me...I have sent them" (v. 18 in context). A few of these resources are:

But let's look lastly at the fact that just as Jesus was given adequate resources to be able to fulfill His mission, the Father has given us adequate resources for our mission. Let's look at some of the resources that Christ speaks of.

Joy (v. 13)

The first is joy. Christ wants us to have such fullness of joy that it spills out of us. Verse 13 says, "But now I come to You, and these things I speak in the world, that they may have My joy fulfilled in themselves." What did Christ's joy do for Him? Hebrews tells us that "for the joy that was set before Him, He endured the cross." Somehow God's joy enabled him to endure the unendurable. It's a resource. Nehemiah 8:10 says, "the joy of the LORD is your strength." Christ was concerned that His disciples not grow weary in their work and for that purpose He prayed that they might have the same joy He had. In John 15:11 He said, "These things I have spoken to you that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full." In John 16:24 He said, "Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full." There is nothing worse than to lose your joy in service. Now it's probably better to limp along in our Christian walk without joy than to not make any progress, but God wants us to be filled with joy as we go into the world.

Any time we are out of fellowship with God, this joy tends to dry up and we lose our ability to minister effectively in the world. David cried out "restore to me the joy of your salvation." Everyone who has fallen into serious sin knows what David was saying. He knew after the Bathsheba affair that temporary happiness was not worth the loss of joy. And this joy can sustain us during even the worst of times. 1 Peter 1 described the unbelievable suffering that those persecuted Christians had been going through, yet in verse 8 he says, "yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory." It was a resource that enabled them to face persecution. And don't blame your lack of joy on your circumstances. Satan, the world, your children - no one can take away your joy unless you let them do it. God never sends you into the world without also providing the resource of overflowing joy. In the sermon on the Mount Christ said,

Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.

Christ has sent us into the world, but He has strengthened us with His supernatural joy.

Glory (v. 22)

A second resource that the Father gave Christ was glory, and He gives that to us as well. To me this is astonishing. Look at verse 22. John 17:22 says, “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” Now we are not talking about the glory of splendor that will be seen at the second coming, but the glory of having God’s power flow through us. *That is glorious!* For example, James connects the supernatural joy that we have just talked about with glory. He said, “you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory.” Why is there glory? Because it is *God’s* joy and *God’s* power. In Jamieson/Faucett and Brown’s commentary this glory is described in this way:

The glory, then, here meant is all that which Jesus received from the Father ... - the glory of a Perfect Acceptance... - the glory of Free access to the Father and Right to be Heard always; the glory of the Spirit’s Indwelling and Sanctification - the glory of Divine Support and Victory over sin, death, and hell - the glory of finally inheriting all things. This glory, Jesus says not, ‘I will give,’ but I have given them;’ thus teaching us that this glory is the present heritage of all that believe...”

This is awesome! You have access to the same glory of the Father that coursed through Jesus and gave Him success in His mission. 2 Corinthians 3:18 says, “But we all, with unveiled face, beholding, as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord.” We might excuse our inability to invade this world or fulfill our mission by saying that we don’t have the resources that Christ had. But Jesus denies it. He has already given you the same resource of the Spirit’s glorious power. Do you exercise it by faith? Make it a part of your mission statement to do so. It’s being driven by a mission that’s kept me from giving up.

His Word (vv. 8,14,17)

The third resource the Father gave Christ was His word. Verse 14 says, “I have given them Your word.” Do we have access to the same word? Yes, we do. Verse 8 says, “For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent me.” It is only the word of God which has the power to bring people to faith; only God’s word is an infallible guide; only God’s word can bring sanctification. *And we have that word!* Hallelujah! Verse 17 says, “Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.” And we need to use the Scriptures when we go out into the world. Our testimonies and experiences are nice, but they don’t save. Only God’s Word has the power necessary to do the work that God has commissioned us to do - whether that work is disciplining our children, or changing our minds about our boring jobs. I remember a book I read years ago that was titled, “Take This Job and Love It!” That book shows how grace enabled him to change his pretty bad attitude on his less than ideal job. I love the title - “Take This Job and Love It!” The Scriptures are a resource that we must never neglect as we heed Christ’s command to go into the world. Living by the Word should be a part of our mission statement.

His love (vv. 23,24,26)

There are other resources such as the personal knowledge of the Father; the privilege of prayer, the power of God's name and the authority of being commissioned. Those are fantastic resources that you will find in this chapter. I don't have the time to go through all of them. But I want to end with the resource of experiencing God's love.

Let's start with verse 26: "And I have declared to them Your name, and will declare it, that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, and I in them." This is an incredible thought. When God sends us into the world to face trials and tribulations, it is not because He doesn't care for us. He sets the same love upon us that He did upon the Son when He sent Him into the world.

And you might think, "If God really loved me, why would He allow such opposition to my leadership? Or such pain? Or such losses?" But those are really ridiculous questions. People opposed Christ's leadership, yet the Father loved Him. Jesus faced pain in the fulfillment of His mission, yet the Father loved Him. Jesus had enormous losses, yet the Father loved Him. Questions like that indicate either a lack of mission or a skewed mission statement that is self-focused. And an understanding of each of these resources can motivate us to get back on track with our mission.

Verse 24 says, "You loved Me before the foundation of the world". Can the same be said of us? Yes. Jeremiah 31 says, "I have loved you with an everlasting love; therefore with lovingkindness I have drawn you." Ephesians 1:4-5 says that He chose us in love before the foundation of the world. The reason I call this everlasting love a resource is that it can give you the motivation to keep on keeping on when things get tough. When you face the kinds of trials that Christ faced in the world, it is important to realize that God's love for you is not conditioned upon how well you perform, or how good you are. Otherwise God could never love you as dearly as He loved His Son. In fact, when God takes your sins into account, the only thing He can do is hate you. Psalm 5:5 says of God, "You hate all workers of iniquity." But God loves us because He sees Christ in us. Look at the way verse 26 is worded. "I have declared to them Your name and will declare it, *that the love with which You loved Me may be in them, [and notice this:] and I in them.*" If Christ is in us, then the Father can love us with the same love. Look at verse 23: "I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me." Isn't that incredible?

Being sent into this world was not pleasant for Jesus. Jesus faced persecution, rejection, humiliation and even death. But God upheld Him with His love and He promises to do the same for us. Turn with me to Romans 8 to see a description of the world that God sent Christ into, and it is the same world that God sends us into. In verses 35 and following Paul says,

Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written: "For Your sake we are killed all day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter."

That is the kind of world that Christ came into, and that is the same world that God sends us to with His message of salvation. And verse 37 says,

Yet in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For [here comes the basis for being able to conquer: "For] I am persuaded that neither death nor life, nor angels nor principalities nor powers, nor things present nor things to come, nor height nor depth, nor any other created thing shall be able to separate us from [notice this] the love of God which is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

God's love resides in the Son, and we can only be loved as we too reside in the Son. But when we have the Son, we have all that we need to be able to take on our mission successfully. God loves us dearly, and verse 32 says that the Father, "having given us the Son, how shall He not with Him also freely give us all things?" Hallelujah! Praise God!

Next time you have doubts about whether you can really do what God is calling you to do, remind yourself that God loves you as dearly as He loves the Son. He will freely give you everything that He gave to the Son so that you can live godly in Christ Jesus; He will give you everything the Son needed to conquer; to be a witness; to learn humility. The Christmas story should remind us that God never sends someone into the world without a mission and all the resources needed to accomplish that mission.

The question is, will you implement the Father's mission or are you determined on implementing your own? Christ is sending you to do something, but will you do it? Perhaps you might think, "If only I had more joy, more love, more understanding, more boldness, I could do my mission." But God gives those graces to those who are willing to serve Him. It is as we step out in faith that the riches of His provisions become so evident.

It's like the man with the withered hand. Christ commanded him to do the impossible when He said, "stretch forth your hand." The man could have responded, "I can't. It's withered. Heal it first and then I will stretch it forth." But if he had said that, he wouldn't have been healed. When God calls us to do something, He doesn't expect us to do it in our strength anymore than He expected Jesus to do His mission in His own strength or the man with the withered hand to stretch out his hand in his own strength. God supplies the resources needed to accomplish the impossible *as we step out in faith; not usually before.*

I mentioned in another sermon the story of Corrie ten Boom meeting a former German prison guard after a conference. He extended his hand and asked for forgiveness - the very forgiveness that she had been speaking about at the conference. He had been so cruel to her that she had nothing but bitterness for him. She felt a coldness grip her heart that made her want to do anything *but* forgive him. But in obedience to the Lord's mission that included forgiving her enemies, she stretched forth her hand and said, "I forgive you." And it was in the act of doing this that she felt the overwhelming power of God's grace coursing through her and loving this man supernaturally. It was because she was willing to step out in the obedience of faith. When did the Jordan River get parted? It was when they step into it in faith, expecting God to come through. When did Peter and his associates catch the amazing catch of fish? When they obeyed him and cast out their net. Look through Hebrews 11 and you will see example after example of God coming through when people stepped into their mission. Jesus said, *"Just* as you sent me into the world, I also have sent them into the world."*

May you enter this Christmas season able to celebrate the fact that you have the same resources that Christ was given when He came into this world, and may you be able to celebrate because you too are willing to take up His challenge. You have a mission from the Father that is unique to you. Be sure to discover it and to fulfill it by His grace. Amen.