

Text: Matthew 21:1-11

Theme: A Man on a Mission

November 27, 2016

Nearly all of you have heard the phrase, used the phrase, or had someone use it regarding yourself. That phrase is, "He/She is really on a mission." The implication? That individual is getting things done, making things happen. Although today is the first Sunday in Advent, our Gospel lesson appears far more appropriate for Palm Sunday. Yet, as we look at it more closely, we will find some key points related to the Advent season as we focus on our theme: A Man on a Mission.

I. By the Father's directive, Jesus was a Man on a mission. Jesus was on a mission to bring light to our dark world. What's one of the noteworthy things we do as part of our Advent services? Each week, we light a candle followed by a second candle the second week and so on. But what's the reason for the candle? Each candle is a reminder of light, a reminder that our hearts were filled with darkness before Jesus arrived. As we watch those candles, they are speaking to our hearts, "Jesus is on a mission to bring light to your darkness. He is the Light of the World, the only Light, that Power of One Light that can bring you the light of hope, the light that will lead you to eternal life."

2. Jesus was a Man on a mission to change the course of history. Where would the world have ended up if Jesus had never arrived on the scene? Before Christ, life was a mess. We were a mess. As Jesus enters Jerusalem riding on a simple donkey, He arrives on a mission that wasn't about Himself, but a much greater mission, the mission that began in the manger but would lead Him to the cross. And through that cross, Jesus changed the course of our history, not just information in the history books, but information within our hearts. Since He walked the earth, the course of history has never been the same and for each of us, that's a great thing.

3. Jesus was on a mission to save the world from itself. When you think about it, that's pathetic, isn't it? God creates humans, like us, and we can't even take care of ourselves. In fact, we've done a marvelous job at doing the opposite of what God intended. It's a pathetic situation, yet Jesus stepped into our pathetic world at Christmas, lived among pathetic people, went to a pathetic death for pathetic people like us and then rose on Easter morning to show the world that not even death could conquer Him. During this Advent season and beyond, we are eternally grateful that the mission of Jesus included saving us from ourselves.

4. Jesus was on a mission to bring hope. What's one of the key components of Advent? Advent is a season of hope, a season reminding us of what God set in motion in order to bring us hope. Advent points our eyes toward the heavens as it reminds us that Jesus is our hope, the Bringer of hope, and that hope, when we hold it in our hearts, will carry us through this miserable world to an everlasting world. Advent is just the beginning. It's the starting blocks of the race that leads us through Christmas, around the corner of the cross, to the empty tomb, and finally to the hope that never ends as we step into heaven.

5. Jesus was on a mission to fulfill His Father's plan. When you think about Advent, what comes to mind? A baby in a manger, right? But Advent and Christmas aren't merely about that Baby. The greatest moment is something

almost outside of our mental understanding. Advent points us to the manger, but that Baby arrives to begin the fulfillment of His Father's plan. That's the bigger picture. The manger is merely one component; Christmas is simply one component, one of several key components that ultimately fulfill God's plan. But what is that plan in simple terms? Not manger; not cross; not empty tomb, but all of those which ultimately leads to "Be thou faithful unto death and I will give you the crown of life."

B. Today, we, too, are on a mission. 1. We are on a mission to wake up. How many of you enjoy sleeping, have a tough time dragging yourself out of bed in the morning? Our Epistle began saying, "Besides this you know the time, that the hour has come for you to wake from sleep." Not physical sleep, but spiritual sleep. That's what Paul is talking about. It's easy to put our life on auto pilot, to press the cruise button and watch the days pass by. But Paul says, "Hey there! Wake up! Don't be sleeping or taking a nap in your faith life or you won't be prepared for the most important event of your life, your exit from this world into heaven."

2. We're on a mission to walk in the light. You recognize these words, "The people that in darkness sat a glorious light have seen." Who are those people sitting in darkness? We want it to be someone we don't know, but those people are you and I when we fail to be on a mission to follow Him. On our mission, we make a conscious effort to move from darkness to light, from our old ways to the new ways that coincide with our faith. On a mission says that we're intent, we're focused, we've decided this matters most, that we will pour our energy every day into being people of the light, people who, by virtue of our faith, step out of the dark and into the light.

3. We're on a mission to prepare our hearts. Advent moves our hearts to focus on the baby Jesus. Christmas continues that preparation as it shows us the responses of different people to the birth of Jesus - like the shepherds, the wise men, King Herod, and on the list could go. As we leave Christmas, our preparation continues at the foot of the cross where we look up in preparation for His death in our place. As those events stir in our hearts, we're led to Easter morning and the empty tomb. And as we mentally leave the empty tomb, our mission reminds us that because Christ rose, we, too, will rise again. What a glorious mission of preparation!

4. We're on a mission to fulfill God's mission for us. What's God's mission for you? What's God's ultimate plan? That we step into heaven by faith. That's the whole point of living! Advent begins the church year and realigns our hearts to our ultimate purpose. While we keep our eyes on that purpose, our mission while we wait is to be Jesus with skin on, to care like Jesus, to be compassionate like Jesus, to forgive like Jesus, to love like Jesus, to invite others to join your mission. You and I, we have a daily mission prepared each day by our Father, and as you connect all those daily missions, they clearly point the way to our first step into heaven.

5. "He's really on a mission. She sure is on a mission today." We may toss the phrase around with little thought, but now we have something new to connect to that mission because each one of us are truly on a mission, on God's mission. Amen.