

Mission-shaped Church. *'Into Practice'*

Matthew 7:24-29

We have had two amazing weeks of hearing from some of our special-assignment missionaries – and seeing the displays about what a number of them are doing 'out there.'

But is this the end of the story for another year? Have we done our missionary bit now?

As I was praying for today and reflecting on the last two weeks – I felt stirred that God wants to show us how He wants of us to GROW (in action and in maturity) as a MISSION-SHAPED-CHURCH – a church which is shaped by the mission and co-mission that Jesus has given us.

What does that mean for you and me? What do you understand your mission to be? What do you understand the mission of Christ Church to be?

Well, over the past two Sundays I think I was expecting messages about how we needed to get out there and go – or at least on how we should better be supporting them in their faithfulness to specific mission-callings.

Xolile Kosi, Ntate Joseph and Lisa de Palmer *have had the opportunity* to tell us to get up and go to the schools, to Lesotho, to the night life and sex-workers of Cape Town – but that's not the message I've heard! I've been amazed at the witness and example of each one – as someone who hears God's Word and acts on it.

Each of them heard a specific and relevant Word from the Lord for Christ Church – and though they did share stories of what God is doing through their lives – each of them challenged us with the Word of God that is God's Word for us now - today.

So how do we grow as missionary disciples of Jesus Christ?

Here are three points – and they all begin with the letter 'O':

1. OBEDIENCE

v.13 – This verse is often thought of as the beginning of Jesus' conclusion to the Sermon on the Mount. It starts to wrap things up. Jesus has been preaching the Kingdom of God – this is how you should live if you want to respond to the invitation of the Kingdom –

- *hunger and thirst for righteousness,*
- *merciful,*
- *a peacemaker,*

- *salt and light,*
- *obeyers of the law,*
- *love your enemies,*
- *give, pray, fast,*
- *don't be anxious,*
- *don't accumulate treasure on earth – the lasting stuff's in heaven!*
- Ask God for your needs

NOW Jesus starts to close off – and he says – ‘Now you know what the Kingdom looks like – and what its going to take – but don't think it's going to be easy! *‘The gate is narrow.’* It's SO much more easy just to follow the way of the world around you. But YOU have to chose: the ***path to destruction*** or the ***path to life??***

v.15 – 23 – Jesus goes on to talk about a tree and its fruit. You'll know a follower of mine by **the outworking of their lives**. JUST to profess to be a Christian with our words is not good enough.

I was visiting a friend on Wednesday night – she and her husband aren't Christians. And we got on to talking about faith. And she said to me: *“Jeremy, I know too many Christians who are one thing on a Sunday – and completely another thing at work or with their families. They preach one message – and they live another! They say “Jesus saves!” and then they beat their children, or are deceitful at work.*

Jesus says: *“Not everyone who says to me ‘Lord! Lord!’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but **ONLY those who do the will of my Father in heaven.**”*

NOTHING can take the place of an active, practical obedience to the direct Word of God to us.

Of course a verbal profession of Jesus is indispensable! Paul says (Romans 10:9) that we must *“confess with our lips and believe with our hearts.”* And also (1 Cor.12) that *“no-one can (truly) profess that Jesus is Lord – except by the (inspiration of the) Holy Spirit.”*

This is important – but what God is really looking for in your life and mine is the evidence of this profession in our lives: not just in the words we hear, or say, or sing on a Sunday.

2. (2nd ‘O’...) **OBEDIENCE**

So Jesus says: ‘Just to profess my name is not good enough.’ But then to really hammer the point home – he says – *‘even **to HEAR his words** is not good enough!’*

v.24 – 27 – and Jesus tells the story of the wise man who built his house on the rock. On the one hand you have the person who ***hears Jesus' words and***

puts them into practice; on the other is **the person who hears Jesus' words and does not do them.**

Can you imagine – if you were a **Maths teacher** who only thought about Maths and read good Maths journals, but with the children you only did excursions to the museum and let the children read stories in class. *You wouldn't be a very good Maths teacher!*

Or if you were an **civil engineer** - contracted to build a motorway intersection. But you delayed on the job – and just organised meetings to talk about the intersection – but didn't actually get on and build it. *Well you'd lose your contract – and maybe even your job!*

Or what about if you were a **doctor** trained and employed to work in **research of kidney treatment** – but you spent your time reading about maternity care and childbirth, or just beating around the lab not really doing anything! *You'd probably lose your funding for the job.*

And yet – how often to we HEAR God speaking to us – he's put us in a place or a position – and we don't put into practice what he's called us to do?!

In the Eleventh Century, **King Henry III of Bavaria** grew tired of court life and the pressures of being a monarch. He made an application to Prior Richard at the local monastery, asking to be accepted as a contemplative and spend the rest of his life in the monastery. *"Your Majesty,"* said Prior Richard, *"do you understand that the pledge here is one of obedience? That will be hard because you have been a king."*

"I understand," said Henry. *"The rest of my life I will be obedient to you, as Christ leads you."*

"Then I will tell you what to do," said Prior Richard. *"Go back to your throne and serve faithfully in the place where God has put you."*

When King Henry died, a statement was written: *"The King learned to rule by being obedient."*

When we grow tired of our roles and responsibilities, we need to remember that God has planted us in a certain place and told us to be a good teacher or doctor or mother or father!

Jesus says: *"Those who hear my words and put them into practice are like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock."*

The foundation on the rock is not just saying: 'Lord, Lord.' And its' not just hearing Jesus words – and thinking 'How nice!' The solid foundation is actually about – KNOWING JESUS – HEARING HIS VOICE – and PUTTING HIS WORDS INTO ACTION.

Or as Ntate Joseph said to us: *“When God speaks – we must hurry up!”*

There was a wonderful message last week about Jesus calling us to ‘take on his yoke – his lifestyle – a lifestyle of prayer.’ So I want to ask you: **How is your prayer life doing?** Has anything changed?

Jesus says – ‘**WHEN** the rains, the wind, the storms come’ – not ‘IF they come’ – or even ‘IF you trust in ME – there’ll be NO storms.’ He says ‘**WHEN** the storms come’. In other words – they’re coming! Like living in Cape Town... **WHEN** the storms come. Listen here – they’re coming!

And **WHEN** they do – are you and I standing on **OBEEDIENCE** to God’s Word to us – or are we clutching onto a comfortable faith?

3. (3rd ‘O’...) **OBEEDIENCE**

v.28 – 29 – *Who is the preacher?*

After all of Jesus’ teaching we read: *“...the crowds were amazed at his teaching, because he taught as one who had authority, and **not** as their teachers of the law.”*

WOW!! Do you remember Ntate Joseph – *“Jesus was not just God playing with words! When he said something – he means for us to listen! And to obey! We must be those who hear the Word and are **QUICK** to obey!”*

Are you ‘amazed’ at Jesus’ teaching? Do you see Jesus as one who has the authority of God? Obedience to **THIS** authority – is what it means to submit your life to Jesus as your **LORD**, as your Master.

Obedience to the authority of Jesus – means being quick to **DO** – to **CARRY OUT** - his Word.

Conclusion

How do we grow as the missionary people of God? Obedience. Obedience. Obedience.

What did you hear God say to you the past two weeks? What is He saying to you in your time alone with him – when you study Scripture? What was the Word you heard through Xolile? What was the word you heard through Ntate Joseph? Or through Lisa (*if you made it in the evening*)? What is God saying to you today?

Are you putting it into practice? What does God want you to do today? What is He calling you to do this week?

I don't think our biggest challenge is a shortage of God's Word in our lives – I think that our biggest challenge – or perhaps our biggest sin – ***is not putting it into practice.***

I close with Eugene Peterson's paraphrase of Matthew 7:24

Jesus said: “*These words I speak to you are not incidental additions to your life, homeowner improvements to your standard of living. They are foundational words, words to build a life on. If you work these words into your life, you are like a smart carpenter who built his house on solid rock. Rain poured down, the river flooded, a tornado hit—but nothing moved that house. **It was fixed to the rock.***”