

The Believers Mission

by J.B. Buffington

The believer's mission is to glorify God and serve others, and the stepping stone to greatness in God's kingdom is service and humility.

Duration: 1:02:12

Scripture: Matthew 6:33, Matthew 20:28, Matthew 28:19-20, Luke 11:1-4, John 17:1-3, John 17:20, Acts 5:42

Topics: "Mission"

Description

In this sermon, the preacher emphasizes the importance of ministering to others rather than seeking to be ministered to. He encourages the congregation to be proactive in finding friends and being a friend to others. The preacher references Luke chapter 15, where Jesus tells parables about the value of seeking and saving the lost. He also highlights the New Testament pattern of daily preaching and teaching about Jesus Christ. The sermon concludes with the reminder that Jesus came to be a servant and to give his life as a ransom for many, and encourages the congregation to follow his example in serving others.

Transcript

Our scripture today is found in John, chapter 17. I tell you, that's a better stand for it, reading God's Word, reading the first twenty verses. I'll read, and you follow along, please.

These words spake Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come. Glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee, as thou hast given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as thou hast given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.

I have glorified thee on the earth, I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do. And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self, with the glory which I had with thee before the world was. I have manifested thy name unto the men which thou gavest me out of the world.

Thine they were, and thou gavest them me, and they have kept thy word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever thou hast given me are of thee. For I have given unto them the words which thou gavest me, and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from thee.

And they have believed that thou didst send me. I pray for them. I pray not for the world, but for them which thou hast given me, for they are thine, and all mine are thine, and thine are mine, and I am glorified

in them.

And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to thee. Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name.

Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost but the son of perdition, that the scripture might be fulfilled. And now come I to thee, and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them thy word, and the world hath hated them.

Because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world, I pray not that thou shouldest take them out of the world, but that thou shouldest keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them through thy truth, thy word is truth.

As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth. Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word.

Let's pray now. Our Father, grip our hearts and help us to recognize that we are alive today not by accident, but by divine purpose. Help us to understand, Lord, that you sovereignly placed us in the time as it pleased thee, and the location on this planet.

And our Father, help us to understand why we are in this world, and as believers that we may leave here with new purpose in life, and for time and eternity we may move toward that goal for which thou hast left us. Save those who are unsaved, and I pray that they honor the Lord Jesus. We need the Holy Spirit's fulness to speak this morning clearly and empower.

We need thy fulness, Lord, for the hearer as well as the speaker. In Jesus' name, amen. Thank you.

You may be seated. Now, fellow believer, I remind you that you are part and parcel of this service, that you are not to sit down now and say, Well, it's all up to the preacher. No, you are supposed to be in the rest of the service with me, praying and asking God to speak to hearts and to speak to your heart and help you to understand.

So I hope you, last Sunday was vastly different than the Sunday before, I hope you enter into the service now and stay in the service until the service is over. This morning, let me speak for a while on the subject of the believer's mission. There are those who call Luke chapter 11, Our Father who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name, and so on, they call that the Lord's Prayer.

That's not the Lord's Prayer, that's a monoprayer. Our Lord did not pray that prayer because it said, Forgive us of our sins. That's not His prayer, that's our prayer.

Our Lord's Prayer is recorded in John chapter 17, it's His high priestly prayer, as He uttered in the Garden of Gethsemane, He prayed for us. He's concerned about the future, concerned about our well-being, concerned about the fact that we are left in a hostile environment, but He said, Don't take them out of the environment, leave them in the world. While you leave them there, keep them from the evil one.

So He prayed for us. You won't understand what our Lord's doing today, read John chapter 17, He ever liveth to make intercession for us. He's still praying for us.

He prays for you. He prayed for you in the Garden. He prayed for all believers, neither pray I for them alone, but for all them also which shall believe on me through their word.

He prayed for me. He prayed for you in the Garden. He prays for us today.

Now, He said, Leave them in the world. In verse 18, look at it very carefully now, As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. He gave a stated purpose of why He came into the world, and He declared that He was commissioned to the Father to come into this world.

First John chapter 4 says, And we know that the Father sent the Son to be the Savior of the world. He's commissioned, and as He makes this declaration concerning the fact that He was sent into the world, He makes an astounding parallel between His being in the world and our being in the world. As thou hast sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world.

Why are you here, believer? Why are you left in the world? Why am I in a world, a place where God had no purpose for us when we got saved? The best thing in the world for Him to do is take us home to heaven. But we're in a hostile environment, we're in an environment that doesn't care about the Word of God, doesn't love God's people, doesn't love God, and yet He said, Leave them in the world, leave them there. And this Christmas season, may God enable us to understand that our lives are here by divine appointment, and we are here on divine business, and we have a divine obligation, and may we grasp this matter of purposeful living today and find out what He wants us to do.

Well, if we can find out why our Lord came, I think we can find out, as my Father has sent me, even so send I you, then I think that we'll be able to understand why we are in the world. Would you turn to the book of Matthew chapter 20, and here's a declaration concerning why the Lord Jesus came into the world, and I begin reading Matthew chapter 20 and verse 20. Then came to Him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping Him and desiring a certain thing of Him, and this is James and John's mother.

And he said unto her, What wilt thou, she saith unto him, grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom? She said, And that was a noble desire. She said, I'd like for my two sons to sit on one side and one on the other when the kingdom comes. But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask? Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.

And he saith unto him, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with, and that was a cup and baptism of suffering. But to sit on my right hand and on my left is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. To sit on my right hand and my left hand is not just something given out of partiality.

It's not given because of favoritism, no, no. Verse 24, And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. Well, they got mad because they didn't think of it first, probably.

But they were moved, saying, What do you guys think? I was thinking about that for myself. Verse 25, But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. Now, in the world, your greatness is revealed by how many people you are over.

It's revealed by your salary. It's revealed by how many degrees you have after your name. It's revealed by the kind of car that you drive and the place that you live and the position that you occupy.

That's greatness in the world. And this infiltrated religious circles in the 23rd chapter. Let me use John and Matthew 20.

He said, They love the uppermost rooms at feet. Well, I want to get on the top floor where I can look down. You know, that's the place of honor.

That's where I want to be. And the chief seats in the synagogues, well, a special seat reserved for dignitaries. That's where we want to sit.

And greetings in the markets when you walk down the street, the desire, Hello there, Dr. So-and-so. Hello there, Brother So-and-so. And your name resounds across.

Everybody hears your name. Boy, isn't that wonderful? Somebody goes to a place in a convention and they have themselves paged so everybody knows that they're there. There's some preachers who do that.

Why? I want everybody to know that I'm here. And to be called a man, rabbi, rabbi, teacher, master. But you be ye not called rabbi, for one is your master, even Christ, and all your brethren, and called, O man, your father upon the earth.

And that doesn't make any difference. He dwells well in Rome. He's not to be called father.

He's not to be called father. But one is your father, which is in heaven. In the military command, you start down here, the private, you know, and the book private and the PFC, and they've changed, and the corporal and the sergeant, and they've changed a lot of things nowadays, you know, and the warrant officer and second lieutenant and first lieutenant and major, captain and major and colonel and full colonel and general, you know, the five-star.

Oh, my! And the higher you get up the totem pole, the more successful, and the place of dominion, and the place of power, the place of privilege, the place where you order people around, that's what the world is. And he said, You're acting like the world. You want to sit on my right hand and my left hand as a place of prestige and power and authority.

And he said, But it shall not be so among you. He said, That's just not the way it is in God's rating system. But whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister, and whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant, even as a son of man came to be ministered unto, but to minister and give his life a ransom for many.

Why did our Lord come? He came to be a servant. Who wants to be a servant? Who wants to be a servant? Our Lord came, he said, to be a servant, even as a son of man came, not to be ministered to, but to minister. That word minister means to serve and to give his life a ransom for many.

You never find anybody waiting on him. You never find him seated at a table and saying, Somebody serve me. You never find him sitting down and asking somebody to wash his feet.

He's the one that's serving, he's the one that's washing feet, he's the one that's ministering to the leper, and the blind, and the maimed, and the haught, and the widow, and the sorrowing, and the sinsick, and all of this. He is the one that's constantly serving others. Why did he come? He came because he came to

serve, and the stepping stone to service is not authority and not position, but the stepping stone to greatness in God's kingdom is service, a ministry, a servant to others.

Who wants to be a servant? That's not in our nature, since the fall of Adam. And Adam got that same diabolical talk from the devil who said, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God. I'm going to sit on the top of the totem pole, and he injected that thing into the heart of the followers of the human race, and we want to be on top.

We want to be the best looking, we want to be the wisest, we want to be the sharpest, we want to be the richest, we want to be on top. Nobody wants to be second fiddle, nobody wants to be backup, nobody wants to play second chair violin, nobody wants to be the backup singer, nobody wants to be the backup preacher, nobody. We want to be number one, and across this nation you see this, we're number one, we're number one, we're number one, we're number one! Instead of we're nobody, we're nobody, we're nobody.

In our Lord's example, he simply says, the stepping stone to greatness is measured by our service to others. Now let me just talk to you a little on this matter. There are a lot of preachers who leave the ministry because they say the pressures of the ministry.

Well, what does the ministry mean in place of servant? If you're a servant, nobody cares about what time you got to bed. You call a servant and you don't say, Hey, what time did you go to sleep last night and how much sleep did you get? You don't check on the servant, he just don't call. And Christians quitting church and moving their membership and moving around because of the fact they're looking for a position of authority and privilege and not looking for a place of service and ministry to others.

Now let me go through the question as a preacher. Are you in the ministry? Why are you preaching this morning? Why, J.B. Buffington, why are you preaching? Are you preaching because you love to preach, or are you preaching because you love the people in the pew and you're trying to help them in the pew? What sayest thou? What is thy motive? And all preachers can preach because he loves to preach. I had a man beg me, saw this new auditorium, came by and said, Let me preach in your pulpit one time.

What do you want to preach for? This big building, that preaching building, this big one. Preach one time. I said, No, I don't need you preaching in my building.

Why? Why? Deacons. Have you ever heard of a deacon leaving a church because they're not going to preach because there were not enough widows and orphans to minister to? That's the ministry of a deacon, called into being because of the widows and the orphans. And a deaconship in the ministry, the preaching, it's a ministry to help to feed the flock, to help the flock, to strengthen the flock, to guard the flock, to watch over the flock, and not in a ministry because you love to preach.

If you love to preach, go find a cemetery and preach away and preach away and preach away. And the preaching, they call the preaching to be a stepping stone to minister to people. The matter of a deaconship is what? Thank God I'm a deacon because it opens the door for me to visit more shot-ins and more widows and more orphans.

That's the purpose of the deaconship. And move to the teacher. Teacher, why? You're teaching.

Boy, I love to teach, and there are folks who love to teach. But do you love the people? Now, you have the gift of gab and the gift of the Scripture, and it feels good, and you enjoy standing before a class, and you're

teaching, you're teaching, but wait a minute! Do you teach because you love those people who sit in the classroom, and you visit them, and you get in their home, and you're concerned about their absentee, you're concerned about their sickness, you're concerned whether they're going to hell or heaven? It's a place, a ministry to help people, not a place to show your skills. Not a place of prominence.

Not a place, listen, to look down. It's a place to help people. Usher, you're an usher.

What's the purpose of the other? Usher, you're looking out to help people find the right seat. You're looking out to help the mother with the child to know where the nursery is. You're looking out, listen, to find little children who disturb the service, to watch over the service.

Taking up the orphan is the smallest part of being an usher. And I'm an usher. Why? To minister to others, to watch out and make sure everybody can hear properly and make sure they see properly, make sure that they're in the proper place.

I'm in a position of handing them out my hand and saying, May I help you? Usher, place of ministry, singer. Well, I like to sing. Well, I think if you're a proper teacher, you'll love to teach.

God gives you that. You're a proper preacher, you preach, you love to preach. Well, wait a minute.

I sing because of the fact that I bless people. God used me and melts hearts and blesses hearts. And I don't sing to show off my talent.

I don't sing because I'll get my feelings hurt. If I don't sing, I sing because I'm trying to bless somebody and help somebody and not satisfy a desire in my heart. Bus worker, bus route.

And I take that time because I'm interested in boys and girls get saved. Moms and dads get saved and homes strengthened. It's a place of ministry, a place of a servant, not a position to occupy over people.

And the staff, the same thing. The organist and the pianist, a place of ministry to bless, to help others. Here, I want to say this for the young mothers.

I think the greatest failure today about this matter in juvenile delinquency is that mothers have forgotten that being a mother is a ministry. And you work everything around to push that kid out to the side. If you're a mother, your most important job is your children.

That's a ministry. And it's not moving them around, it's moving yourself around to minister to your boy or girl. That is your greatest ministry.

You read the 31st chapter of the book of Proverbs, not the woman. She'll do him good and the whole thing is her life is wrapped up in her household. It's others, others, others, others, a ministry.

And we're rearing mothers who have children. And I don't want to take time for my boy, my girl. I don't want to take time to nurse them.

I don't want to take time to see. I've got my plan for life. Hear me? Your plan for life includes rearing of your boy or girl.

That's first, that's foremost. The tragedy is that we've rejected this thing. People say, well, I want to live my life.

The whole mark of the ERA business is I don't want a little child pushing my life around. You're going to be the kind of proper mother your little child will wake you up when you're tired, be sick when you're heart sick, and a constant demand, what? A ministry, a ministry. Home call 24 hours a day.

And that's what's wrong about the charismatic movement of priests and Sunday school, because it's not a ministry. It's all about I've got the gift. And 1 Corinthians 14 says, what you do, do to excel.

Build up the church and that thing does not build up anybody but yourself. That destroys it. And the tragedy, folks, is folks who leave church and all this and split churches and heart feeling and bitterness because of the fact we want to be ministered to instead of ministering to somebody else.

Could I tell you something this morning? Usually I don't have a friend in the world. I'll tell you how you can get some this morning. Very simple.

You forget that you don't have a friend in the world and look around and find somebody to be a friend to and you have a friend before you leave service. That's just that simple. Young person, you say, I don't have any friends.

That's your fault. That's your fault. You got two hands, you got a mouth.

And what happens? Forget yourself and forgetting yourself, you'll find all that your heart cries out for this morning. And if you feel nobody loves me, nobody cares. Forget yourself.

Don't try to have somebody minister to you. Look for somebody else to help your burden is lifted and you'll leave here revived in spirit. Ministry.

I read a book this past week written by a medical doctor called Paul Brand. He's written a tremendous book called *Fearfully and Wonderfully Made*. It is a tremendous book and he likens the body to the body of Christ.

And he wrote some astounding things, illustrations. He tells about the cells of the body and the fat cells especially, and this isn't trying to be funny, fats necessary in the body. When you get more than the body needs, it stores it in fat cells.

They're stored there to give back to the body what it needs in hours of emergency. And he said, I like to think of the fat cells as a bank or cells of the body. In times of plenty, they bulge with excess as a body deposits more than it withdraws.

In times of want, they channel their chemical wealth back into the bloodstream. Now he said something happens in the body, I don't know what it is, but he said sometimes a dreaded thing occurs in the body, a mutant mutiny called a tumor, a cancer. What is a cancer? It is a fat cell that refused to give back to the body it takes, but it refuses to give back to the body and it destroys the body because it will not share with the rest of the body that which it has been entrusted to.

The cells function beautifully. You look at them and there's nothing wrong with them except for one flaw. They have become disloyal.

In their activities they disregard the body's needs. They're skilled in its lazy role of storing up fat, but it rebels against the leadership of the body and refuses to give up its reserves. Each is a healthy, functioning cell, but disloyal, no longer acting in regard for the rest of the body.

Oh my, what I take but I will not give back to the body what's been entrusted to me, I become a cancerous cell that destroys and cripples and ruins the body. There is no part of my body that's worth anything separated from the body. Take my eye out, lay it over there, it's no good.

Cut off my hand, put it over there, it's no good. Cut off my feet and put it over there, it's no good. It's only good as it operates in the ministry of serving the rest of the body and the moment that the fat cell refuses to give back and minister to the rest of the body, a tumor, a cancer is on its way.

Jesus said, I didn't come to take from the body, I came to give. I came to serve. I came to give out.

I came to what was given to me to share and pour back to the rest of the body. That's a powerful illustration and members need to understand that. This ministry of Mother, let me come back to this.

And here he writes again about the ministry, just simply touch. He talks about the skin and the value of the skin and the value of a touch, just a touch. He talks about a leper.

A leper needs more than anything else to feel a touch. They're unclean, they're unwanted, their skin is dead and they can't feel anything. No, just to feel a touch will make them feel somebody cares, somebody loves me, somebody is interested in me.

And he used the illustration about motherhood, look, in 1920, the death rate among infants and some family in hospitals in America approached 100%. Dr. Fritz Talbot of Boston brought from Germany an unscientific sounding concept of tender, loving care. While visiting the children's clinic in Dusseldorf, he had noticed an old woman wandering through the hospital, always balancing a sickly baby on her hip.

Mama cooked with a baby on the hip, mama washed with baby on the hip, mama, listen, did wash the dishes with baby on the hip, made up her table, baby on the hip. That said, his guide is old Anna. When we've done everything we can medically do for a baby and it still is not doing well, we turn it over to old Anna and she cures it.

How does she cure it? Just carry it around on her hip. When Talbot proposed this quaint idea to American institutions, administrators derided the notion that something as archaic as simple touching could improve their care. Statistics soon convinced them in Bellevue Hospital in New York after rule was established that all babies must be picked up, carried around and mothered.

That doesn't mean that you take the milk from your body and put it in a bottle and put the baby in the bed. It means you take that baby in your arms and hold that baby to your breast. All babies must be picked up, carried around and mothered several times a day.

The infant mortality rate dropped from 35 percent to less than 10 percent. Despite these findings, even today, touching is often viewed as an unavoidable part of the more important task of feeding and cleaning the baby. Seldom is it considered an essential need in itself without which a baby may never mature.

Jewish people are highly tactical, as are all Latin, Bengal, Saxon, Germanic people are rolling the scales. In general though, the higher the social strata, the less parents touch their infants. I'll read it again.

The higher the social strata, the less parents touch their infants, and juvenile delinquency is a thing of a higher class mainly. Perhaps we've reached the extreme in America where mothers carry their babes at arm's length in plastic carriers, and fathers spend an average of 30 seconds per day in a passive contact

with their children, among some severely disturbed children such as autistic. Forceful and persistent touching may represent the only hope for a cure.

An autistic child needs almost constant touching and rubbing to trigger a relief from his self-hugging isolation, and an autistic child does this, feels and does this, hugging himself. And God is saying, there's a ministry out there! Touch somebody! Touch somebody! Help somebody! Lift somebody! And mother! Mother! Mother! Put the baby in your arms! Pull that baby to your breast! Sing to that baby! You're giving emotional stability! You're giving serenity! You're giving peace! You're giving a foundation for stable living! God is saying our ministry is not determined by what the one we minister to can contribute to us, but what we can do for them! Why is euthanasia? Well, these folks in the old folks' homes, they cost money! They take time! They contribute nothing! They can't help anybody! They're burdened on everybody! So what? Kill them! That's a whole philosophy! That's crude and vague, but that's the same, that's the identical thing! If they cannot contribute anything in their helplessness, then put them to sleep! Can I give you an illustration? And I doubt that this woman will be called a Christian, but there's a woman, a lady in Calcutta. She won the Nobel Prize, Nobel Prize, Peace Prize.

They call her Mother Teresa. Her work in Calcutta applies for her work among members of India's lowest caste. She cannot save all India, so she seeks the least redeemable, the dying.

When she finds them in the gutters and garbage dumps of Calcutta's attic, she brings them to her hospital and surrounds them with love. Smiling women dull their sores, clean off the layers of grime, and swaddle them in soft sheets. The beggars, often too weak to talk, stare wide-eyed at this seemingly misdirected love offered so late in life.

Have they died and gone to heaven? Why this sudden outpouring of care? Why the warm, strengthening broth being gently spooned to their mouths? A reporter went from New York to ask her, why not, why should she expend her limited resources on people for whom there was no hope? Why not attend a people worthy of rehabilitation? What kind of success rate could her hospital boast of when most of its patients died in a matter of days or weeks? Mother Teresa stared at him in silence, absorbing the questions, trying to pierce through the façade to discern what kind of man would ask them. She had no answers that would make sense to him, so she said softly, these people have been treated all their lives like dogs. Their greatest disease is a sense that they're unwanted.

Don't they have the right to die like angels? Who wants to be a servant? Hey, wait on me. Who wants to do that? That's why our Lord came from heaven. He came to be a servant.

As my Father has sent me into the world, even so have I sent you into the world. What do you come? He came to send us into the world to serve, not to be ministered to, not for somebody to shake my hand, not for somebody to come see me, not for somebody to wait on me, not for somebody to do something for me, but he sent us into the world to do something for somebody else, and in doing that you forget yourself. Number two, look at Luke 19.10. Our Lord came into the world, and he stated specifically why he came into the world.

At the house of Zacchaeus, when he led him to himself, verse 10 of Luke 19, he said, For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost. Now why was he in the world? He came to seek and to save that which is lost. Why is a Christian in the world? Not to make money.

He's to seek and save that which is lost. God will let you make money on the side to pay expenses, but we're in the world of sowing. That's what the Great Commission is all about.

Everybody's been involved in sowing. Everybody's been involved in a matter of the Great Commission. The Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

As my Father has sent me into the world, even so send God them into the world, a parallel of sowing and of a ministry of a servanthood and a ministry to seek and save that which is lost. When you read Luke 15, when our Lord was freeing the Republicans and sinners, the religious crowd said, Hey, this man receiveth sinners needed with him. What's wrong with you? And then he gave them a parable.

He said, If you were a shepherd and you had a hundred sheep and ninety-nine of them were in the fold, if you were a shepherd, you'd leave the ninety-nine in the fold and go after that one which was lost, if you were a shepherd. He said, If you're a lady and had ten pieces of coin and that coin was of valuable to you, of great value to you and a testimony, you would sweep the house upside down under the bed and everywhere looking for that coin, because it's something of great value. If you're a lady and there was your dowry on your head, you'd look.

And he said, If you were a father and you had two sons and one went astray, the one that stayed home wouldn't be sufficient for you, what would happen? Oh, you'd be concerned over the fact that a son had gone astray and a father would weep and mourn over a son that's gone astray. Even so, this is why I'm a friend of publicans and sinners. They're helpless like sheep.

They can't find their way. They're defenseless like sheep. They cannot defend themselves.

They're in a place of great danger and they know it not like a sheep. They're like a coin, something of great value out of circulation. They're like a son living in a place of deprivation in a hog pen.

They'll perish with hunger and their return brings great joy to heaven. And he said, That's the reason that I'm a friend of publicans and sinners, for the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost. We're sent into the world to look for sinners.

Look, seek. Several years ago, I used two or three illustrations on another to point to this. There was a young man who was a member of this church.

I'm not going into all the details. Mother called me, point of hysteria, and said, Something such and such happened at the job. A runaway left and he was a boy, I guess, 16, 15, 16 years old.

I went to the job trying to find out what was, get somewhere in the world. He went. I went to the mother's house and the father's house, and they were weeping.

The son was lost. If it had been my son or daughter, I would have been terribly upset also. And they said, I think maybe by something that happened, it's possibly he's going to Jacksonville.

And I got out on Interstate 4 and I started driving. I was looking for a runaway. I looked on this side of Interstate 4, looked and drove.

I drove all the way past Orlando, looking. Somebody was dear to his mom and dad, whose hearts were crushed. I said, Well, unless he's caught a ride, then he couldn't have gotten this far and gone long ways.

And so when, on the other side of Orlando, I turned around. It seemed like I had a staff member with me. I don't remember.

But I came back on the north side of Interstate, looking, looking. I wasn't paying attention to anything, trying to stay out of traffic and not uphold traffic. But I was looking for a runaway.

I was looking for a son who was dear to parents. I finally drove back to the house and I drove back to the house. I didn't want to go and say, Well, I couldn't find him.

But I drove back to the house and somebody had picked a young fella up north of Orlando, up in Jacksonville, to take him to Jacksonville. And had gotten a hold of the boy's heart and made him call home. And he was headed home.

Boy, when I got in that door, there was rejoicing. We heard from him. We heard from him.

We heard from him. And I waited. And I waited until somebody brought him home.

And I have a vision now, in the bedroom, of mama and daddy and son, up in the middle of a bed with their shoes on, not caring whether their sheets were under their feet or whether they'd break the bed trying, and down on their knees in the bed and standing up in the bed and laughing and crying and praising the Lord. Why? There was somebody that had gone astray and went back home. And we talk about soul winning.

Lord, hear me. There are people out there, God loves. There is, listen, His creation.

He loves them. Christ died for them. And we don't seem to care whether they die or live or whether they go to hell or heaven.

We're left here in the world. I would not have much concern. I would not have much respect for you if one of mine went astray.

And I said, come help me find my boy, my girl. And you said, I don't have time and I'm busy. I would lose respect for you.

You'd lose respect for me if I didn't try to help you find yours. In Chattanooga Valley years ago, there's a man by the name of Doc Stoker. I tried to win Doc to the Lord many, many, many times.

It was cold. It was wintertime. Doc hadn't been seen for a day or so.

And one afternoon, Chattanooga Valley said, well, we'll find him. He's up on a mountain somewhere. Look out now.

Said, we'll find him, hand to hand. They found him. Doc walked along, stepped on a rock with his left foot.

Rock was slick and it threw his left foot like that and went under a log, big log, just in the fourth of it. Pushed it under a log and was laying down. You saw where Doc tried to get that foot out.

And when he did that, his head hit a rock. Pitched forward like a head hit a rock. And you saw there in the ground where he tried to dislodge his foot and it wore a hole in the ground.

Trying to pull it out and almost wore the skin off of his left ankle. When they found him, he was dead. Very cold.

Whether he froze or left, I don't remember. I have carried Doc off that mountain. I won't forget that scene.

How wonderful it would have been if a community had joined hands and said, we're going to find Doc. Not physically, but we're going to find him. We're going to find him.

And we're going to stay after him until we find him. And finally, in a church of this day and hour, has lost the compulsion to find sinners. We preach and we teach and we put signs out and put in the newspaper and said, oh, you sinners, come here and get saved.

No, the Lord said, the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost. And we're left in this world to seek and to save that which is lost. That's our mission.

And we're to join hands in the power of a church, to join hands in prayer, in sowing, in visitation, trying to listen to seek and save that which is lost. That's a New Testament pattern. In Acts chapter 5, the Scripture said, and daily in the temple and in every house they ceased not to preach and teach Jesus Christ.

It was an everyday affair, not a Tuesday, Thursday, Saturday, but an everyday affair. Persistent. I read this as humorous, but this is true.

Dr. Tom Malone, great preacher. And I'm reading now. We tell our folks, if you go out and things don't go well, don't come back and throw cold water on the situation.

If you get dog bit or snake bit or kicked off a porch or the door slammed on your nose or cussed out or something like that, don't be telling about it. We say, if something good happens, tell about it. Here's something good happen.

Unusual, funny, but true. One night in the workers' meeting, one lady said, Brother Tom, something good happened tonight I think you ought to know about. We went to this home tonight and as we started to knock on the door, the door opened and a man said, Come in ladies, I have been looking for you.

Sit down right over there. We sat down and we hadn't said a word yet. The man stood up in the middle of the floor and said, Now ladies, I want to talk to you a minute.

Now ladies, I wouldn't give you a nickel for television through Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, Friday, Saturday or Sunday, but on Monday night, I love the programs that are on. And every Monday night for 12 months, somebody from Emmanuel Baptist Church has come pounding on the door. They come in and they all say the same thing.

They all have the same thing on their minds. And for one solid year, without a single exception, I have had my favorite programs interrupted every Monday night. And he was just preaching away.

And he said, Now ladies, I will tell you what I will do. I want to make a deal with you. If you will leave me alone for one Monday night, I will bring the old lady and the children and so help me God, I will come to that church.

That's it. They don't like that. Maybe that's our problem.

We go once, twice, we don't go back. Come to seek and save that which was lost. And I must hurry.

Number three, would you turn back to Matthew 20, verse 28. A son of man has come to minister, to be a servant, not to be ministered to. The son of man come to seek and save that which was lost.

Number three, verse 28, Matthew 20, the latter part of the verse. Even as a son of man came, not to be ministered unto, but to minister and to give his life a ransom for many. He came to exchange his life for the liberation of others.

Now you and I cannot die for sinners and pay their sin debt. But there's something that if we intend to reach sinners, we're going to have to follow our Lord and that's laying down our lives that others may live. And the sad thing is that folks are giving their lives to sports and giving their lives to business and giving their lives to pleasure and giving their lives to fame.

And the Bible says, The world passeth away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. And one day all and all the smoke's away. You know who's going to be famous? Those that have come to minister.

Those that have been soul winners and those who have forgot their life and given it to serve others. Now would you turn to John chapter 12 and verse 24. John 12, verse 24.

And I must hurry. John 12, 24. And Jesus answered them, verse 23, saying, The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified.

What's he going to be glorified? He's going to die. Verily, verily, I say unto you, except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. But if it died, bringeth forth much fruit.

Now we know just as well as I'm standing here, we know if we take a one watermelon seed and hold it in our hand, that's all we'll ever have. We know that. We know if we take a kernel of corn and we preserve it, we will not plant it in the ground.

We know that's all we'll ever have. We understand that except the corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone. And a watermelon seed abides alone unless you put it in the ground and let it die.

And a corn of wheat abides alone unless you put it in the ground and let it die. We know that. And God said, All right, you take your life and you refuse to invest it in the ground where it'll die and reproduce, and when you come to the end of life, you still have your little watermelon seed, and you still have your little kernel of corn, and you still have your little grain of wheat.

When you die, that's all you'll have because you did not allow it to die, henceforth. That's the law. In the book of Luke, it says this.

Let me turn there. Luke chapter 9, Whosoever will save his life shall lose it. Whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall save it.

And this is the day I want to do my own thing. What we're saying, I'm going to live my life. You leave me alone.

That's what kids are saying to parents. I want to live my own life. Selfishness.

That's what husbands and wives are saying to each other. I want to live my own life. Selfishness.

That's what, listen, citizens of our country have torn our country apart. I want to live for self. I want to lose my own life.

Okay? You live your own life, and when you lived it, you've lived it and you've lost it. That's all you have out of life. That's all you have.

There's a shortage in Christian service of everything. Why? Because people say, I don't want to die. Shortage of finances.

Why? Well, we take that which belongs to God and spend it on self. I don't want to get that struck. That's, except the corn and wheat fall on the ground and die to budge along.

We take God-given talents and we use them for sports, for fame, for business. We want to die. We want to live our life.

What happens? When you die, you leave it all behind. Faithfulness. There's some folks who will not be back tonight.

You know why you won't be back? Because you've got plans. Selfishness. I'm not coming back tonight.

Don't count on me. I don't intend to be back. What's your problem? You refuse to die.

There are folks ought to be in the pastorate and evangelism and the mission field. Why aren't they there? Because we want to keep our own life. Except the corn and wheat fall on the ground and die.

It abides alone. Must I go in empty-handed? Must I meet my Savior's soul? Not one soul with which to greeting. Must I empty-handed go? There will be nobody standing beside you at the judgment seat of Christ to bring rewards unless you die and die and die and die.

Folks who go so many nights when everybody else is sitting home with us, they die to rest. Folks who spend Saturday in bus route, they die to their day off. Folks who are proficient in Bible study die to the newspapers and the television programs.

Folks who pray die to other things, die, die, die. There's a Christian logic. Paul said, 2 Corinthians chapter 5, and I'm on the homestretch.

I think I can see the house, but I'm on the homestretch. 2 Corinthians 5, the love of Christ constraineth us. Because we thus judge that if one died for all, then we're all dead.

If he died for me, then I was dead. And that he died for all that they which lived since I was dead, and he died for me, and now I live. Then listen to this logic that if he died for me and I'm alive because he died for me, then I ought to live for him.

Logic. That he died for all that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but to him which died for them and rose again. Here's an article.

Where's God in this world? Well, the tabernacle's not here. You can't see the Shekinah globally. The temple is not here.

Where's God? The Son of God walked among men, and we saw him. Where's God? He said, You shall be my witnesses. After World War II, German students volunteered to help rebuild a cathedral in England.

One of the many casualties of the Luftwaffe bombings, as the work progressed, debate broke out on how to best restore a large statue of Jesus with his arms outstretched and bearing the familiar inscription, Come unto me. Careful patching could repair all damage to the statue except for Christ's hands, which had been destroyed by bomb fragments, should they attempt the delicate task of reshaping those hands. Finally the workers reached a decision that still stands today.

The inscription now reads, Christ has no hands but ours. He's going back to heaven, and we are his witnesses, our bodies, our hands are to be his hands, our eyes are to be his eyes, our ears are to be his ears, our hearts are to be his heart. How we have to doubt what we want to do with our hands and with our eyes and with our ears and with our heart and with our body.

We die and yield ourselves that he might use our hands and our bodies to represent him. I read Dr. Brands, and I'm skipping over a lot of stuff I'd like to share with you. His mother, she was a beautiful thing in her youth.

She grew up in a well-to-do family. Her name was Evelyn Constance Harris. Lived in luxury and protection of a well-to-do family in suburban London.

There were nine daughters in the family. She was an acknowledged bell-lover, lovely in her fur balloons and flowered hats. And when she went out to minister to the poor, she wore her plumes and her beautiful clothing because she thought it would have been patronage if she did not look her best.

She was well-educated and went to school in Paris, became a model as well as an artist. For years past, she was more and more restless and dissatisfied. One day, a missionary came to the Strict Baptist Church, and Evie became imbued with a longing to carry the gospel to far places.

One day, a young missionary named Jesse Brand came to the church to speak. Evie listened spellbound to his account of the thousands of people on the mountains of South India who had never heard the gospel of a trip he and another missionary had taken up in these mountains of death, so cursed with malaria that even a few white men had never dared to go there. The people had begged them to come back, but there was no one to go, and Evie felt faint with excitement in her heart.

She said, Send me, here I am. She went and found that one up later marrying this man, and then her son writes about his mother. Paul Ryan writes about his mother as the days have come and gone.

Now listen to what he says about her. I think of my own mother, and by the way, Dr. Brand is a missionary to the lepers. I think of my own mother from a society home in suburban London who went to India as a missionary when Granny Brand, that's what they called her, reached sixty-nine.

She was told by her mission to retire, and she did until she found a new range of mountains where no missionary had ever visited. Without her mission's support, she climbed those mountains, built a little wooden shack, and worked another twenty-six years. Sixty-nine, worked twenty-six years more.

Because of a broken hip and creeping paralysis, she could only walk with the aid of two bamboo sticks. But on the back of an old horse she rode all over the mountains, a medicine box strapped behind her. She sought out the unwanted and the unlovely, the sick, the maimed, the blind, and brought treatment to them.

When she came to settlements who knew her, a great crowd of people would burst out to greet her. My mother died in 1974 at the age of ninety-five. Poor nutrition and failing health had swollen her joints and

made her gaunt and fragile.

She had stopped caring about her personal appearance long ago, even refusing to look in a mirror lest she see the effects of her grueling life. She was a part of the advance guard, the front line, presenting God's love to deprived people. How was she out there? She died, and died, and died, and died.

This is one other illustration I'm through. In Atlanta, Georgia, a young married couple by the name of Brother and Mrs. John Ridings attended church in Atlanta. God saved them.

God began to deal with their heart. God got a hold of their heart about to mission field. Mrs. Ridings had one little girl, and God touched her husband's heart, and he came down, surrendered to them.

God called him to mission field, and she slipped down beside him and told of her fear about the mission field. Yet she said, if God called my husband to mission field, then I am called to go with him, and I'll go. And that night, she and her husband said, Lord, we'll go where you want me to go, dear Lord.

We'll say what you want me to say, we'll be. They went to the mountains of Peru, 11,000 feet. She became pregnant and gave birth to a little baby that was stillborn.

She came out of that with hepatitis, couldn't get out of the mountains to the hospital in Lima. Took her to a little makeshift hospital up there in the mountains. Went into the hospital, and two days later, she died.

And in situations like that, there's not time to notify loved ones, mom and dad and classmates and brothers and sisters. You have to bury them within 24 hours. And out there in the mountains of Peru, a young woman and her baby that had been buried 30 days before, buries her, she dies alone.

It seemed like a waste of life. Nobody there to stand with her husband and with her little daughter. No mom and dad to get the news to come to the funeral.

No flowers there, no fanfare. Just alone! But wait a minute. She didn't die in Peru.

You know where she died? She died at the front of a Baptist church where she died to her will and lived to the will of God. And when she went to the mission field, she went to the mission field because she had already died. The Son of Man has come to seek and save that which is lost.

We're here in the world so winning, seek and save lost. The Son of Man came not to be ministered to, but to minister! He came to be a servant. That's our position.

He came to give his life a ransom for many. What are you doing with your life? You say, I'll keep it. Okay? That's your prerogative.

But when you die, you've lived a wasted life. That's not God's will and God's purpose for your life. He intended that you die to your life that he might live in you and you'll keep that life forever and ever and be drawing dividends throughout all eternity.

You see, you go down to the bank and you borrow money and you pay interest so much for the use of that money. That's to be expected. You don't take your money and go down and let them use it for nothing.

They pay you interest. You borrow it, you pay them interest. God said, would you loan me your life? I'll pay you interest.

Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, love the Father's not in for all that's in the world. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, the pride of life is of the world and the world passes away.

It doesn't pay any interest. And you lose the principle also. But he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.

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