

Intro: Mission Month begins with the proper foundation for boasting of Jesus. All evangelism is really boasting of the Savior-King. It is pronouncing His greatness and glory to a world that has forgotten in their sin that there is even a good King. Not only is it a proclamation of this King, but it is also the forming of His Kingdom within His people, the Church. You see, it is our desire, when our eyes are upon the King, to live under His rule and to follow Him wholeheartedly. Jesus' Kingdom has begun already in the Church where He reigns. Are we living like we're in the Kingdom of God?

James Boice tells a story of a storekeeper in Decatur, Georgia in the tumultuous race revolution of the 1960's who had two signs hanging in his shop. The first read, “Jesus is coming again!” The sign directly below it read, “We reserve the right to refuse service to anybody!” Boice points out the obvious and unintentional humor in this fact that the storekeeper acknowledged the fact that if Jesus should return that he reserved the right to refuse Him service. But the second truth was not so funny. This man who was looking forward to the King's return was obviously not understanding the Kingdom of Christ at all for refusing service to those of a different race than himself. For the Kingdom of God consists of those from all people groups and races, it is not a Kingdom for only one race, but for a new humanity formed from those of every nation, tribe, and tongue. You see, looking forward to the King's return means that we are living in His Kingdom now and as citizens of this Kingdom we are to be walking in-line with the King's rule. If we harbor racism in our heart, we don't know the King very well. If we harbor any sin in our heart, contemplating whether or not we should cheat on our taxes, tangle with an affair, or gossip about our boss, then we don't yet know the power of the King's return. When our eyes are upon our own wisdom, or the perceived wisdom of our culture, we miss the power of the Kingdom and fail to proclaim the King's greatness, substituting within our own ideologies or remaining silent in fear altogether.

Because of this it is imperative that keep our eyes on the King and His works and His desires, lest we fall into the silence of the fearful or the ignorant. We are not ignorant of His grace, His reign, or His glory, but until we have eyes FULL of Him our mouths will not boast of Him. So, the first step to becoming obedient and joyful heralds of this King begins with having our eyes fixed upon His glorious grace and impending return. When we are convinced of the reality of His Kingdom and God's redemptive plan for the universe, then we are not afraid to speak of what is real: Jesus is the Savior-King who is returning very soon.

1. Imitate those who strive to walk according to the Gospel of Jesus.

- a. Those who strive to walk in the righteousness already attained for them by Jesus
- b. In line with the apostolic gospel (“in us”)
- c. There is a propriety in following the example of those who strive to follow Jesus
 - i. This is not the same as those who try to be moral
 - ii. This is those who know and trust in the grace of God in Jesus Christ and strive out of that
 1. This kind of “striving” boasts in the person and work of Jesus, not the person and work of “me”
 2. This kind of “striving” is full of hope, full of joy, full of passionate zeal, full of humble repentance, and full of love and deep appreciation for the Cross of Christ
 - iii. 1 Timothy 4:12 – “set an example for believers in speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity”
 1. There is a progression in this list from the most “observable” that impacts others to the deeper, less observable internal character.
 - a. Speech – the most observable
 - b. Conduct - deeper than mere speech
 - c. Love – motivation behind conduct and speech
 - d. Faith – that which one depends upon for all: Jesus
 - e. Purity – reveals who one truly trusts in and loves ultimately
 2. In all of these areas, we are to be examples and to follow the examples of those who trust and obey Christ (Heb 6:12; 13:7; 1 Cor 11:1)

- d. We have been told that we are only to follow Christ and not follow men, but here we see examples, admonitions really, to imitate and follow the examples of believers who follow Christ
 - i. Read the Word of God (see Hebrews 11) for examples of faith
 - 1. remembering that even believers in Scripture were not good examples all of the time
 - ii. Read Christian biographies and missionary journals
 - 1. Again, not all examples are good all the time
 - iii. Listen to each others' testimonies and marvel at the greatness of Christ
 - iv. Follow the example of those who boast about Jesus and strive after Him in holiness, faith, love, conduct, and speech
 - 1. This is the key factor of a good example
 - 2. Does this example lead me to love Christ, boast in Him, and strive for holiness in His image?

2. Watch out for those whose eyes are set on earthly things

- a. many are enemies of "the cross of Christ"
 - i. note the content of their resistance: the Cross of Christ
 - ii. many "followable" people are out there, in the name of Christian, who deemphasize the Cross of Christ
 - iii. many even resist it, fighting against the gravity and glory of Christ's cross in the role of our redemption
- b. They walk without shame of things they should be ashamed of
 - i. This is different than "stumbling" in sin, it is walking in without shame or apology (glorying in it)
 - ii. It is something that saddens Paul
- c. Minds set on earthly things
 - i. their god (that which rules them) is their appetites for earthly things
 - ii. They don't boast in the cross of Christ, but rather in other things and their speech, conduct, love, faith, and purity reveal it to be so
 - 1. What is their speech like?
 - a. DEFINITIONS MATTER
 - b. Often people will use words that they know we would define differently in order to be accepted by us, but they really mean very different things
 - c. BE AWARE, make people define what they mean
 - 2. How does their conduct glorify Jesus?
 - a. Does it exalt, or boast of the Cross of Christ?
 - b. Specifically: how does it imitate Him and His Cross?
 - 3. Is their love genuine or self-centered?
 - a. Are they Christ-like in their love, laying down their reputation, power, and honor?
 - b. More specifically, do they love people enough to point them to Jesus with their love?
 - i. Pointing people to Jesus means that one has her eyes upon the greatest and most beautiful things, not merely upon the earthly things
 - ii. This doesn't mean one is preaching all the time, but lives in a constant conduct and speech character that exemplifies and boasts of Christ as the reason and the goal of the cosmos
 - 4. What do people trust in?

- a. Where does the general characteristic of their love, conduct, and speech reveal their hope, their reliance, and their means of acceptability by God? Is it the Cross of Christ?
- 5. How is the purity of their lives?
 - a. A passion for purity reveals what one believes Jesus is worth
 - b. I want to be pure for my Savior-King-Husband who gave His life for me

3. Keep your eyes on your coming Savior

- a. Having our eyes fixed upon the heavenly things, we speak and work for the Kingdom of God
- b. He will transform our lowly bodies into glorious ones, making things whole
 - i. This does NOT mean that we reject or neglect this earth or people's earthly needs now
 - 1. We are not going to be with Jesus floating on clouds and playing harps and never eating again.
 - 2. The redemption that comes in Christ is a remaking, a making whole of what was divided and broken with sin, of the Creation
 - a. Any view of heaven and our heavenly bodies that doesn't account for eating fish is inadequate (Luke 24:42-43)
 - ii. This DOES mean that our hope of redemption and wholeness is found not in this world, but in the heavenly restoration to glory by the Coming Savior, and our eyes are fixed upon Him and this promise of His return
 - 1. Following Jesus means that we live our lives in the anticipation of His return, when He will complete our redemption and set Creation into order
 - 2. It is about having eyes to see eternity, not merely the here and now, but to know and wait for the consummation of His Kingdom
 - a. We live in between the ages, and our mission is to tell people about Jesus and His glorious return
 - b. But we cannot do that well until *we* are joyfully awaiting His return to restore our broken bodies to glorious worshipping ones
 - 3. Missions begins with: What do I feel is the most important thing right now?
 - a. Is it JESUS?
 - b. Or, is it how I *feel* about Jesus?
 - i. There is a subtle difference that changes everything
- c. Out of the gospel promises flow boasting anticipation of Jesus! (MISSIONS)
 - i. Jesus has the power to subject everything to Himself (Eph 1:10)
 - ii. There is hope for anyone in any circumstance under any realm with any illness from any family in any land.

4. What Do We Do?

- a. Do whatever is necessary to fix our eyes upon Jesus and His promises!
 - i. Imbibe on the Word of God
 - ii. Pray to Him and ask Him to reveal Himself and His promises to your heart
 - iii. Soak yourself with the reality of His impending return for you
 - iv. Surround yourself with examples to follow (believers who get the gospel!)
- b. Remember Reality
 - i. The eternal Kingdom of God has begun in His church: act like the citizen that you are!
 - ii. This world is broken, but redeemable by Christ who has the power to subject everything to Himself

1. You are still broken, too: redeemed and yet to be redeemed (Romans 8:22-23)
2. Take hope when you fail, when your feeble bodies, minds, and souls forget the gospel or act like a citizen of earth instead of a citizen of Heaven
 - a. You are not a citizen because you act like it
 - b. You act like it because God has made you a citizen in Christ
- iii. Be Aware of those who profess to be Christian, but are focused only on earthly things and don't boast of Jesus
- c. BOAST OF JESUS!!
 - i. This doesn't mean that you dump all of God's redemptive history on the checkout girl at Safeway
 - ii. It does mean, however, that you and I are so filled up with wonder and awe at the glorious grace of God through Jesus that we love to boast about Him and His works
 - iii. This is the root of mission: When we marvel at the cross of Christ, we boast of God's gracious provision of His Son and His reign over us with joyful abandon
 1. Everything comes under His purview and reign, so Christians are constantly placing our experiences into the framework of His redemptive Kingdom
 - iv. We must learn to see how our and our neighbors' experiences fit into the story of God's gracious provision in His Son
 1. Sin = enslavement
 - a. rejection of His rule that harms my proper relationship with God and leads to enslavement by my heart's idols
 - b. We believe in a Great Rescuer from this enslavement
 - c. One who saved us by giving up His life
 2. Belonging = God redeems and adopts the ungodly by paying their debt down by the blood of His true Son

Conclusion:

I know that sharing the good news that the true King of the Cosmos has arrived, died, and been raised up again so that we can be children of God can be difficult. There is always a cost involved with proclaiming that you are the citizen of a heavenly Kingdom with a King who was raised from the dead. But we believe that this is the ultimate reality, don't we? We believe that God rules over history and has planned and is working out His sovereign will over the earth? We believe that sin is the problem with the world and that Jesus came to redeem us and restore us. We believe that humanity has rejected God and in our pursuit of self-rule have become enslaved to our own disintegration, destroying ourselves in the process and coming under the righteous wrath of God. We believe that we are called to testify to the Redeemer's presence and work, calling forth all people to turn from trusting in useless idols that enslave and to trust in the great King who died and rose again to redeem us and bring us into His eternal Kingdom. We must learn to place our stories within His Great Story, to explain and define realities such as holiness, sin, righteousness, judgment, redemption, mercy, grace, and hope. We must fit our neighbor's stories into this grand story as well, proclaiming hope in Jesus to them and calling them forth to trust in the King and His completed work through the blood of His cross.

But before we can ever have the impact upon this world that God has called us to have in His name, we must fill our vision with this story, more than that, with the glory of Jesus Christ, the living and returning King. It is only when our hearts find their joy in Him that our mouths boast of His greatness fearlessly. If we lack courage and fortitude, it is most likely due to the fact that His return has not made its impression upon our souls. So, let us press forward to imitate the apostle and strive for the righteousness in which citizens of the heavenly kingdom walk. Keeping our eyes upon the returning King and His glorious gospel until His praises and glories burst forth out of our mouths and all hear and know the beauty of our Savior-King. Oh to see the dawn of that day. Come quickly, Lord Jesus.