
Sermon
on 'Mission—Like I Did'

::: ZERO :::

*“Grace to you and PEACE from God our Father
and the Lord Jesus Christ.”*

1 Co 1:3. (NRSV)

::: Amen.

::: ONE :::

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

I don't know who of you is familiar with the movie “Blues Brother” from 1980, directed by John Landis.

But if you google the words “on a mission from God”, first thing you will find are pictures or clips from exactly that movie.

Two blues musicians, Jake and Elwood Blues go back to the orphanage in which they grew up. But it is about to be closed down because it can't pay the taxes anymore.

So, they think about how they could help—not having any money at all, as one of them has just been released from jail.

Their old keeper and friend Curtis sends them to church—the church of Rev. Cleophus James.

And there, during the service Jake has a vision. A bright light shines through the church window down on him, and he suddenly realizes:

They have to bring their old blues band together in order to raise enough money to pay the taxes.

And then a crazy voyage starts... which in the end leads them to the tax office where they are finally able to pay the orphanage's taxes... and after that straight to jail for all the damage they caused on their mission...

::: TWO :::

Now, these two Jake and Elwood were absolutely clear about their mission. Saving their old orphanage.

I wonder, if I asked around, would you be able to tell me your mission.

The other way round. If you asked me, could I give you an immediate and straightforward answer?

Mission—this sounds so big.

Mission—is this not the job of missionaries?

Mission—is this not the job of professionals?

::: THREE :::

During my time working at the UMC Children and Youth Department I was responsible for missionary youth work.

For some reason I often spoke about youth outreach work. Actually, the reason was that some of my young people had a huge problem with the term “missionary”.

‘MISSION’ to them sounded something like overpowering another person with some sort of Christian force, subduing the other persons will and convictions.

I guess, for centuries, this indeed is how some Christian missionaries understood their mission. Maybe still even today.

∴ FOUR ∴

If we have closer look on the bible readings we have just heard, I think we can get a different view on what a biblically inspired idea of mission could be.

Acts 1 states that the call to be Jesus' witnesses comes through the Holy Spirit—it not derive from a human drive.

So, at first we have to realize that Christian mission is **GOD'S MISSION**.

1 Chronicles puts an emphasize on the call to **DECLARE** God's glory and his deeds. It is not about shouting in someone's face. But it is about a firm proclamation of God's work and beauty in this world.

And John 20 clearly sets our task up as being divine messengers of Christ, as he was sent by his Father. **WE'RE ON A MISSION LIKE JESUS WAS**.

∴ FIVE ∴

Altering the sequence a little bit, I have left Matthew 28 for last.

Let me read the passage to you again adding the two previous verses:

¹⁶ Now the eleven disciples went to Galilee, to the mountain to which Jesus had directed them.

*¹⁷ When they saw him, they worshiped him; **but some doubted.***

¹⁸ And Jesus came and said to them, “All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.

¹⁹ Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

²⁰ and teaching them to obey everything that I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, to the end of the age.”

Mt 28:16–20 (NRSV)

Have you heard this: *They worshiped him; but some **DOUBTED.***

Strictly speaking, one can also translate:

And when they saw Jesus, they fell down before him, 'but they doubted' (also). (hoi de edistasan)
→ You hear the word 'DISTANCE'.

Actually, It fits the disciples—to how they lived their lives with Jesus.

To the sinking Peter, who dared to come to him on the raging sea, Jesus calls out:

You of little faith, why did you doubt? (Mt 14:31)

It is the same word here.

The disciples, who have been travelling with Jesus for so long, notice that despite their closeness and love for Jesus, there is also A DISTANCE, A DOUBT that they cannot simply overcome.

Jesus calls them to Himself, calls them to follow Him, they feel it through the Holy Spirit. Before the love and goodness of God they fall down in worship. But at the same time, *a doubt* remains.

But really?

This is what we are told at the very end of Matthew's Gospel?

Shouldn't everything be clear now?

Shouldn't all doubts be dispelled by now?

Obviously not. The disciples still have doubts:

Can all this be true?

Can I believe my eyes?

And above all, can I believe my heart
which hears the call of God?

::: SIX :::

Jesus does something remarkable:

He does not stand up and say: "*Doubt no more!*"

Or even condemns the disciples ...

We read: *Then Jesus approached them and said to them: All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me.* (Mt 28:18)

Jesus approaches them. He overcomes this distance. He himself overcomes doubt and gives the disciples assurance.

Jesus says: *All authority has been given to me in heaven and on earth.*

There is always doubt.

We doubt ... again and again...

We doubt About ourselves...

We doubt ... in my life, have I backed the right horse—or one day will I realise that everything was just an illusion?

We doubt ... whether there is really a way out of the situation I am in ...

But then—it's not a matter of giving you courage yourself.

Pray, fall down, worship the one who comes towards us, overcomes our doubts. So, we take new courage to follow him and accept the mission he gives us.

::: SEVEN :::

So, what is it:

God's mission? Our mission? My mission?

Actually, it is that simple, we are on a mission from GOD, and I am part of it.

God sends us to bring good to other people's life's—and to listen what this good is.

God sends us to proclaim his beauty in creation—and to learn how we can foster this beauty.

God sends us to invite others to a community where we have found his love at work—and where there is room for all.

God sends us to speak of his love—and to hear God’s love from others.

And all our ways we can be sure that “we are on a mission from God”.

::: Amen.