

Faith Walk! - Sermon Discussion

Date : 9 Jul 2023

Sermon Title : Following Jesus in Mission

Speaker : Rev Shannon Chan

Text : Luke 9:23

INTRODUCTION

Lawrence Ko, guest speaker at our recent Missions Conference, called our attention to the Latin phrase, “*Missio Dei*”, translated as “The Mission of God”. He said, “Mission begins with God”. The late Rector Emeritus Professor John Stott said, “The living God is a missionary God.” For a world that was and still is lost in sin and the broken consequences of sin, God sent His son Jesus more than 2000 years ago to suffer and die for our sins. “*Missio Dei*” also means the sending of God. Jesus was sent to the dying world to fulfill God’s mission. God’s mission is not only His redemptive work in the world but also His transformative work in our lives. Jesus in mission was about and still is about transforming lives and redeeming the world. In Faith Methodist Church, our mission is transforming lives and changing the world. Just as Jesus was sent into a sinful, dying world to fulfil God’s mission, we are sent into the world to fulfill God’s mission for us.

Luke 9:23

An anchor verse that captures or shapes the heart of those who are sent out is Luke 9:23. The Anglican writer and theologian CS Lewis said, “We may think God wants action of a certain kind but God wants people of a certain kind.” We often become very busy in doing good or getting involved in programmes and activities that assist us in doing more for Jesus. However, our efforts often fail if they focus on the ‘doing’ side at the expense of the ‘being’ side. The ‘certain kind’ God is looking for are those who have aligned every facet of their ‘beings’ with that of Christ’s ‘being’. To produce the ‘certain kind’, Christian formation must precede missions. Christian formation or Christ-like formation invites us to follow Christ so that we can effectively and properly participate in the work and mission of Christ without disrupting the work out in the field. For those of us considering involvement in missions, Luke 9:23 spotlights for us the radical call to be the ‘certain’ kind. There are 3 facets to this:

1. Deny self.
2. Cross bear... Die daily
3. Follow Jesus

1. **Deny Self** - “...Whoever wants to be my disciple must **deny themselves**...”
This means to deny your ‘SELF’, the idol of ‘I’.

For we walk by faith, not by sight. 2 Corinthians 5:7

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- It does not mean denying ourselves in some ascetic way such as denying ourselves of chocolates or ice-cream.
 - Denial of self-exaltation, self-interest that will hinder our doing the will of God
When Jesus talked about denying ourselves, He means denying the idol of 'I' that wants to control our lives. This does not mean that what we want is necessarily wrong. It means we must take our wants and desires down from the throne and place Jesus and His will as the governing power in our lives. This goes against the grain of our self-seeking culture. The radical call to become the 'certain' self – to deny oneself means that whatever it takes, we choose to put aside the things we love the most and do what God wants.
 - In the Garden of Eden, Eve and Adam ate the fruit of the knowledge of good and evil despite God having told them not to. They took God off the throne of their lives and put the idol of 'I' on the throne instead.
2. **Cross bear... Die daily** - Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and ***take up their cross daily*** and follow me.”
- It means that you are willing, for Jesus' sake, to die each day to your entitlements, preserving your reputation, your standing, your position and even your life. The late German pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer wrote, “When Christ calls a man, He bids him come and die.”
- To a first century Jew, the cross was a torture tool, a means of carrying out the death sentence which was introduced by the Romans. Criminals were made to carry the cross they would be hung from.
 - Jesus tells us to daily welcome death to self. This daily process is the progressive and continuous crucifixion of one's natural self-centredness and is counter cultural.
- Accepting and enduring suffering allowed by God
Even when we cannot understand God's purpose behind our suffering, we believe that because we are children of God, this is for our good and for God's glory.
- Dying to self in today's immoral and unethical times
Sometimes it involves sharing the humiliation of Christ: Especially when we choose to live godly in today's immoral and unethical times. Or when we stand with and speak out on biblical values from the Word of God in today's, increasingly we may be challenged or face hostility. We may be scorned, marginalised or penalised. The radical call to be the 'certain' kind, to cross bear, to die daily means you choose to die to your reputation, your rights, your entitlements, your position, even your life, in daring to speak up for Christ.
3. **Follow Jesus** - “Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and ***follow me***.”

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This means doing what Jesus would do. It means submitting to the Lord's Word, not calling your own shots. It means guarding against thinking you are following the Lord when you are actually following your 'SELF'.

- **Following Christ is sifting all we do through the Bible grid**

The Greek verb for follow "*akoloutheo*" expresses 'union with' or 'to walk the same road'. Pastor Scott Childs said, "Following Christ is about walking the same road and letting Him take the lead. He wants to lead you through the Bible. He desires that you read it daily and meditate on what you learn. Christ wants you to sift all that you do through the Bible grid. Following Christ is obeying all that He says. If there is a Scripture that you know you are not fully obeying, you are not following Christ."

There are many who think they are following Christ, but are actually following their own 'SELF'. Some enter the Christian faith and even enter Christian missions and Christian ministry because they think these are roads to self-fulfilment. Jesus clearly taught that if we are living for ourselves, for our own interests, we are not following Him. To follow Jesus requires repudiating a self-centred, self-referenced life, be it for you or for your family or loved ones. This is a high calling.

Example of Margaret Barber

Margaret Barber was an Anglican missionary sent by the Church Missionary Society from Norwich England to the city of Fuzhou in Fujian China in 1899. She fully exemplified what it meant to deny oneself, take up one's cross ...daily, and follow Christ. Although she was betrayed by envious co-workers, she wanted the Lord to teach her the 'lesson of the cross' so she chose not to defend herself. Even after the truth was finally discovered and her Bishop offered full restitution and reinstatement, she would not lay down the way of the cross. Thereafter, she chose to return to serve in China without any financial support and impacted the lives of many well-known preachers/missionaries there including Watchman Nee, Faithful Luke, Simon Meek and Wilson Wang. Like their mentor, these men would be the 'certain' kind who followed Jesus in mission. Beyond this, the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills, who has proven Himself faithful and provided for Margaret Barber, Faithful Luke and other missionaries in the past, is the same God today who will also provide for all our needs as we step out in faith in the mission of God.

CONCLUSION

Rev Edmund Chan said, "The work (we) are to do is the mission. The way (we) are to walk is the mandate. The mandate must precede the mission." We need to be the 'certain kind' of people who would deny self, take up our cross ... daily and follow Jesus. Let us focus first on 'being' instead of jumping straight into doing, so we will be more effective in our mission of transforming lives and changing the world.

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A. Review Sermon Application

Purpose: Reflect on how you have been embodying God's truth.

- 1a. How successful have you been in fulfilling what you/your group had committed to do for the last FaithWalk?
- 1b. What were some challenges you faced and what would you like to celebrate?

2. Appoint someone to read Luke 9:23 slowly. Which of the 3 facets – to deny oneself, to cross bear and die daily, and to follow Christ do you find the most difficult to do?

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B. Relate Sermon Content

Purpose: Relate with the Truth and Resolve for Transformation.

- 3a. What is one thing about your 'SELF' that is hindering you from aligning your life to what God wants you to do?
- 3b. To cross bear and die daily is to be willing, for Jesus' sake, to die each day to your entitlements, preserving your reputation, your standing, your position and even your life. Are you cross bearing today? If not, why?
- (i) Consider your life today. What is one thing you can do to take up your cross daily in order to follow Jesus in mission?
 - (ii) Why is it important to focus on your 'being' before jumping into 'doing' in missions for God?
- 4a. We need to measure our actions and decisions against the grid of God's Word to ensure we are truly following where God is leading us. Do you find this too difficult or challenging?
- 4b. What is one thing you need to change in order to allow Christ to lead you through the Bible?
- 4c. How can your group members encourage or help you to commit to the change in 4b. above for the following week(s) until your next meeting?

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C. Testimonies, Prayers and Action

Purpose: Give glory to God, seek Him and embody His Word.

5. Share your personal testimony of how God helped you to be willing to align your 'being' to His 'being' and the impact this has made in your life and what you can do in missions.

OR

Give thanks to God for being the faithful God who will provide for all our needs, blessing our ministry or missions when we truly follow Him and step out in faith in the mission of God.

6. With a prayer partner, bring all that have been shared in 4b and 4c to God, asking for the Holy Spirit to help you give up a self-centred, self-referenced life to become the 'certain' kind of person God can use in missions.

Pray for your group and our church to become a people willing to deny ourselves, take up our cross daily and follow Christ. Pray for God to fill us with courage to step boldly into the missions that He calls us to, trusting that the God who owns the cattle on a thousand hills will provide for us.

Optional items:

Suggested worship songs:

1. First and the Last – Hillsong https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NUPuCW_tiwA
2. You Alone Can Rescue – Matt Redman
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aDQeREdlw_4
3. Jesus I Come – Awaken Generation <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KMS6xvfquL4>

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