

Money follows Mission
Matt 6:9-15, 33-34 Matt 28:18-20

Friends November 9, 2012 is a very important day. It's a day on which an event of world-wide monumental significance will take place. It is the day when "Skyfall" the newest James Bond movie is scheduled to be released.

Now I don't know if you are a big fan of 007 or not? Or if you think that Daniel Craig makes a better Bond than Sean Connery or Pierce Bronsnan was...

but whatever your opinion is about those things you do have to admit that the world's most famous spy always seems to get the coolest gadgets and cars to help him accomplish his missions. That's part of the appeal.

In the past every time Bond was assigned to a mission he would visit to the "Lab" where a scientist named "Q" would outfit him with all sorts of spy gadgets.

A watch that would shoot a lazer beam, a missile pen, ski poles with machine guns in them, a belt buckle that shoots a

grappling hook and cable, plastic explosive disguised as toothpaste.

And then there were 007's cars – sleek and beautiful but don't let their looks fool you. They were no ordinary luxury cars - they could become a submarine; they were outfitted with missiles, oil slicks and computers and anything else that might be helpful on the mission.

And inevitably at some point during the mission 007 would use these gadgets or cars to get himself out of a sticky situation and keep himself alive so he could complete his mission.

That's what they were for! James Bond didn't get these cars and gadgets just because they were neat technology, or because he was a gadget collector, or to use for his own personal means.

No, he received them because he was a secret agent and he had a mission to accomplish for the British Government.

And friends, that mission was always of utmost importance – because there was always a super-villain was plotting to take over the world through some diabolical means.

And if that villain succeeded it would mean that millions of innocent people would be affected – and 007 was the last hope to prevent this from happening.

And so James Bond would spring into action, go on the mission...and try stop the villain. And while many things would usually happen to him on the mission and his life was often in grave danger.... he was never willing to never give up, he would never walk away from the mission. – too much was at stake.

And friends, this is another aspect of what it means to be a steward – to be left in charge of God’s business.

Not only are we left in charge of the money and possessions which God gives us, and so we give at least 10% back to God out of thankfulness and recognition of where it all comes from - but we have been left in charge of His mission as well.

In other words like James Bond, we have been given a mission - God’s mission has been given to us... Listen to how the scriptures tell us about this

All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting men's sins against them. And he has committed to us the message of reconciliation. We are therefore Christ's ambassadors.

So the mission of God is that he is “reconciling the world to himself in Christ” vs. 19 That’s the Shalom – the wholeness that Nathan Barnes was speaking about last week.

And this verse also tells us that **WE** have been included in this mission, its something God “gave us” and “committed to us” and as a result **WE** have a title – “Christ’s ambassadors”

Being left in charge of God’s business goes beyond just managing the money and possessions and time God gave us – we are also left in charge of His Mission of reconciliation – of Shalom.

So Friends you and I need to understand that we are agents of God's Kingdom, agents of Shalom – so... you can call yourself “Double o’heaven” if you like! Only - don’t be secret about it.

Because we have very clear instructions on what our mission as agents of the Kingdom of God entails – they come to us from Jesus and we read them this morning in our second scripture reading. Jesus says...

“go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, ²⁰and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you” (Matt 28)

You see the root of that Shalom – that wholeness that Nathan talked about last week comes from reunited with the Triune God, to be totally “baptized” – to be immersed in a relationship with him.

We can’t experience wholeness by keeping God at arm’s length, or just relating to one part of the trinity to the exclusion of the other parts - as we learned about with the 3 Colors of Spirituality.

Unless we are reconciled to the Triune God, we can try our best to patch up the brokenness in our lives and around us, but we won’t experience that wholeness – that shalom that we long for...

We’ll just feel like we’re trying to keep it all together, and that things are only just a short step away from falling apart again.

But the good news is that the scripture tells us that God reconciled us back to himself – Father, Son and Holy Spirit so we can experience Shalom, wholeness – and He gave us the mission to bring the source of Shalom to people from every nation.

So we have this mission, you and I- together as the body of Christ we are agents of the Kingdom and we need to disciple others to become followers of Christ and immerse them into a full relationship with God – as Father, as Son and as Holy Spirit.

And friends - this is an extremely important mission – millions of lives are a stake here!

Because there is a super-villain, Satan! And He wants to lead as many as possible away from being followers of Christ so they will be destroyed along with Him on judgment day – because misery loves company!

And it's not an easy mission friends, because not only is the enemy fighting against us, those whom we need to bring the good news of reconciliation to often view us as the enemy instead!

So, in light of this I want to focus on what it means for us to remain faithful agents - faithful stewards, of God's mission! Agents who won't give up.

Because we can easily become distracted, discouraged and defeated on this mission –so we need to be encouraged to continue on in it - to be faithful in it, so that when we've completed our life and we stand before Christ we will hear these words “*Well Done, good and faithful agent!*” (Mat 25:21)

Now, having said all this – one of the things which distracts, discourages and defeats us most often is the lack of money! Why?

Because we believe that money makes the world go ‘round – and from simple observation that appears to be true.

In fact the wise teacher who wrote the book of Ecclesiastes sees this as well – He writes: *A feast is made for laughter, and wine makes life merry, but money is the answer for everything.* (Ecc 10:19)

And it's easy for those of us who are on God's mission believe it too...if we only see with our eyes.

How often do we say “If we had the money we could...”

- Hire additional staff to run programs and reach people
- Give more to aid work or support new church plants
- Set up a benevolent fund
- Make our facilities more attractive and accessible

And on and on the list goes. If we only had the money... we could really make a difference and accomplish our mission.

And so we reveal that what we truly believe is that Money determines Mission. – You have a Mission for me God... then Show me the Money!

But friends the scriptures teach us that there is more to life than what we can see with our eyes and as agents on God's mission if we are to be faithful stewards of that mission then we need to believe that Money follows Mission - even if we can't see the money!

Here's what the scriptures say about it

¹Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see. (Heb 11)

³³But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness and all these things will be given to you as well (Matt 6)

This is reflected in how we are to pray – Jesus instructed his disciples to pray for God's Mission first!

'Our Father in heaven, hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

and then for what is needed to accomplish it.

Give us today our daily bread... our physical and material needs. Forgive us our sins...our spiritual needs - and lead us not into temptation...our need for guidance

How often do we reverse this –we pray “Lord provide us with enough money to meet our budget, to pay our bills, Lord help us to grow spiritually, Lord give us discernment about what we should do ...” and then afterwards we pray “and Lord help us to reach out into our community”

Friends, it's so easy for scarcity to become a distraction from focusing on our mission isn't it?

When we can't see where the money will come from we end up focusing on the lack of money instead of seeing the mission opportunities around us, whether it is in our personal lives or in our life together as the body of Christ.

If money determines mission then when we have a small amount of money, we pursue a small mission, which in turn leads to small results and an even smaller amount of money.

And the cycle continues until we abandon the mission and are simply concerned with our own survival – and our discipling efforts degenerate into membership drives so that we can get more people to pay the bills and keep the doors open.

And people instinctively stay away from that kind of church?

But friends the good news is that money follows mission! Say it with me- Money follows Mission!

The way to break out of the vicious cycle of a scarcity and survival mentality is to rediscover God’s mission and remember our calling to be agents of the Kingdom! Faithful stewards of the mission.

And this begins when you have realized that there is a scarcity of good deeds in your life. That you’ll never be good enough to pay the debt you owe to God.

It begins when you are able to admit that you aren’t able to be that good person you strive to be! It starts when you receive forgiveness from Christ because you believe his death paid for

your sin and God looks at his perfect life instead of your failures.

Friends, this life altering experience of being “born again” as Jesus calls it is the starting point for becoming an agent of the Kingdom, for being made a steward of God’s mission.

And we need to be reminded of it- or perhaps experience it for the first time in order to move from believing that Mission is determined by Money... to living like Money follows Mission!

And friends that is George Muller’s story and testimony.

George was born in Prussia in 1805, and his early years were marked by stealing, cheating, gambling, lying and drinking.

While he was at university he began attending Christian prayer meetings and studying the bible. At one particular prayer meeting George saw a man on his knees in prayer and God used this to impress upon George his need for salvation.

So George went home that night and knelt in prayer to ask for Christ's forgiveness and became a follower of Jesus.

And George understood that this meant He had been given a mission – so he became a missionary, an agent of the kingdom of heaven working to bring shalom, wholeness, into the lives of people.

For George this meant that he eventually ended up in England in the city of Bristol where he began to work with orphans.

He and his wife started out by taking 30 girls into their home, but the need was great and so he furnished another three houses on his street and was able to take in 130 children.

Nine years later Muller decided that it was time to build a facility which could house 300 orphans.

Twenty five years later Muller had built an additional four facilities bringing the amount of orphans that could receive care to a total of 2, 050.

And don't get any images of Annie and Ms. Hannigan in your head – these children were well cared for.

Muller worked hard to care for their whole person, to bring shalom into their lives by introducing them to the scriptures and to prayer, as well as providing for their physical needs and making sure they were educated or apprenticed.

In fact many nearby factories and mines which traditionally relied on cheap orphan labor had a hard time finding workers because of Muller's efforts to place his children in meaningful service positions and trades.

But what's really incredible about George Muller is how he lived out the truth that mission follows money.

Through-out his life George never solicited donations from anyone to fund the mission which Christ had given to him.

He simply prayed to God and trusted that money follows mission.

Many times, he received unsolicited food donations only hours before they were needed to feed the children, further strengthening his faith in God.

For example, on one well-documented occasion, they gave thanks for breakfast when all the children were sitting at the table, even though there was nothing to eat in the house.

As they finished praying, the baker knocked on the door with sufficient fresh bread to feed everyone, and the milkman gave them plenty of fresh milk because his cart broke down in front of the orphanage.

Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness all these things will be given to you as well. Money follows mission friends.

And I offer George Muller as an example not because his methodology of living this out is the only way to live by faith or even the way we should live it out...

but because his extreme faith is a good counter balance to our often extreme skepticism which says money determines mission.

You see I believe that the Holy Spirit will use George's example to inspire us take the necessary steps of faith – big or small - in our personal lives and in our life together as the Body of Christ, to discover how we are involved in God's mission of bringing Shalom and restoring this world.

And I pray that will be able to, like George, look beyond what is right in front of us...

So that we will not only believe that what we need to accomplish God's mission will be provided – even if we can't see it,

But perhaps more importantly so that we will perceive the desperate need for God's mission in this community, in our neighborhood.

That we would be able to look beyond the nice homes, well kept lawns, the BMW's the Audi's, the job titles...

That we could feel the emptiness, the fear, the hopelessness which exists in the lives of our friends and neighbors in direct contrast to how they appear on the outside.

We all need to be able to see the brokenness that needs God's wholeness, his Shalom... that's why we are Valleyview Community Church...

And then it all falls into place – the mission, the money and everything else.

Friends let's pray and ask the Holy Spirit to work in us right now, to give us more insight, to see beyond what is visible and to grip our hearts with His mission of reconciliation...

Let's pray...