
The Worthy Sending of Savoring Saints

3 John 1-8

Introduction

The sending of men and women with good news of the glory of the blessed God has been the lifeblood of God honoring missions. It began in the church at Antioch and continues even today. It is how the great commission is fulfilled. It is how God calls His people to Himself. The going of God-besotted men and women to announce to all the people groups that God is supreme and sovereign and saving and satisfying is what we celebrate.

At the core of this going is the good news of the doing and dying and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. It proclaims the truth of the gospel and announces that God has commanded all men everywhere to repent. It sends men and women whose hearts and lives are living models of sacrificial Kingdom seeking. It requires, in the face of the suffering involved, an all-encompassing vision of the glory of God.

The point of missions is to speak the truth in love, to proclaim the gospel, to make disciples by Bible intensive teaching. As we turn to our text, notice how John, the Apostle, makes truth the center of circle of loving and living.

- Loving in truth (v.1) - The power of John's love for Gaius is in truth. His is a love for Gaius that encompasses truth in all that it can mean in their relationship. It is truth that shapes sincerity and genuineness and real, life-changing discipleship. Real love then is in the sphere of truth in God's Word that leads us to truth about and with one another.
- Walking in truth (v.3-4) - The purity of Gaius' living is in his walking in truth. John loves in truth those who live in truth. It brings him no greater joy. His gladness in God is fueled by the visible evidence of God's grace in believers.

So here it is: ***truth must shape our loving and our living***. And when it does, it takes on a certain look and feel and taste when it comes to sending men and women for outreach to the unreached.

This motivates John to pray for Gaius in a very interesting way. Verse 2 tells us that Gaius prays that God would make him as strong and healthy physically as he is spiritually. Now does this mean that God is primarily interested in your health and wealth? No. But it does mean that God has purposed to use men and women who love and live in truth to be significantly used in His Kingdom. So what is that for Gaius? And what might it be for us as well?

The Practice of God-honoring Missions

What does faithfulness in walking in truth look like in relation to missions?

The situation referred to here in verse 5 like what we think of as modern missions. These were men who out preaching the Word, establishing or encouraging churches. Often they traveled with very little of what we would think of as regular support. So they were dependent on the support and sustenance of believers wherever they went.

Though we tend to do more with a formal approach to gathering support and identifying men and women we support, the underlying principle is the same. There are people God will call to go forth and the rest are called support those who go forth.

Gaius (and probably the whole church he is gathered with) is commended for being faithful in what was being done for these people. This faithful service to Christ is being done on behalf of men and women they don't even know. They are strangers. They were not necessarily people from their own congregations. But they recognized what part they could have in the spread of the gospel.

Now, this is not an exhaustive philosophy of missions. There is much more throughout the Bible about our efforts at proclaiming the gospel to every people group. But I am deeply challenged by this text to reflect more carefully and be more Biblical about how we go about our efforts in missions. Three simple words to help us with our thinking

Sending

(v.6)

We have a responsibility *to send people out as a partnership*.

We must not confuse the simplicity of what is going on here with the complexity we have. Believers were taking these people into their homes and churches, taking care of them and sending them on their way. Obviously, we do much more than this when we are thinking about the sending of our missionaries.

The point here is that they made their on-going ministry possible. They were sending people on to the destination of God's purpose. We find this sort of language all through the New Testament. In Acts 15:3, Paul and Barnabas were "sent on their way by the church." In Acts 20:38 and 21:5, the word is used in the sense of escorting or accompanying. Paul wrote to the Corinthians that he planned to come to them and possibly even winter with them and then they could send him on his way (1 Corinthians 16:6) just as he expected them to send Timothy (v.11). In 2 Corinthians 1:16, he reiterates this idea. Listen to Titus 3:13, "Diligently help Zenas the lawyer and Apollos on their way so that nothing is lacking for them. 14 And let our people also

learn to engage in good deeds to meet pressing needs, that they may not be unfruitful.”

So our efforts at evangelism to all the people groups will involve the sending of people in very practical ways. All this will flow from Romans 10:14-15.

Savoring

(v.7)

Verse 7 gives us the reason we are to send these people out. The verse begins with the word, "for". There is something that marks them as the kind of people we ought to be sending. What is that?

They are the kind of people who have gone out *for the sake of the Name*. What does this mean? What does it mean that they went out for the sake of the Name? And is this important?

First, it is important because of the way he puts this sentence together. It literally reads, "For on behalf of that Name they went out." Further, the word translated *for the sake of* is actually the first word in the sentence. So it is like he has bold italic large font, getting your attention that this is significant.

But what does it mean? This is one of those phrases in the Bible that we hear all the time and probably don't think too much about it. So let me put it this way. If this marks the kind of people we ought to be sending, then what is it we are looking for? How do we know that our missionaries are going for the sake of the Name?

We are to send (and support) missionaries who are going because of God centered reasons. They are a people whose vision of the gospel and evangelism and church planting and discipling is Godward and God centered. They love God and savor Him. It is His Name and His fame that they are going to spread. It is the good news of the glory of the blessed God that is in their hearts motivating their living and dying.

And don't pass over this too easily. After being reared on the mission field, serving in Germany and rubbing shoulders with missionaries from all over the world it is my sad observation that this is rarely what truly motivates missionaries. Most missionaries (and this is very evident from the appeals they make and from missions conferences) go to the field because they have some vision of a "lost and dying world." Now hear me! We must see a lost and dying world that needs Christ. But that is an insufficient motivation for the suffering and sacrifice that real missions involves. Why? Because it is man centered and results oriented.

Beloved, if your primary reason to go to Africa or Brazil or across the street is to see people saved then I want to challenge you to focus your motivation, not on the needs of man, but on the greatness and the

glory and the mercy and the wonder of the great God you are representing. Yes, those needs are great. But those kinds of needs often inspire great humanitarian efforts. There is nothing uniquely Christian about them.

But O, when you go to spread the fame and reputation of God by proclaiming the salvation of His Sovereign Son so that He is magnified and glorified, then the true needs of sinful, dying men will be met. And amazingly, in this you will find deep wells of sustaining grace to persevere no matter what the providence of God brings.

So, I encourage you to savor God. To plunge into the Word until you become enamored of the God you are representing and proclaiming.

Supporting

(v.8)

The last phrase of verse 7 makes the support of verse 8 necessary. For the missions enterprise, these men and women who savored God were sent out taking no support from, in John's words, the Gentiles. For us, they went out entirely dependent on believers.

This tells us that it is right for missionaries to be supported from believing churches. It is what we ought to do. We as a gathered people need to be engaged in the great enterprise of spreading the gospel and the glory and gladness of God throughout the world by supporting those whom God is sending. We ought to be searching out among ourselves, and listening carefully to identify people who are savoring God in such a way that we can send them and support them.

You probably noticed that I missed a phrase in verse 6. We ought to be sending people *in a manner worthy of God*. Here it is and it is very important. If we find people who are like this we need to send them and support them in a manner that corresponds to the God who is sending them and whom they savor. This means with adequate support. This means with real, time consuming, detail naming prayer. This means with emails and cards and caring. It means, particularly for those who go to remote locations, with news and "keeping in touch with the world" stuff.

I can pretty well illustrate what this does not mean. It means that we don't send our left over toys and yesterdays clothes. It means that we don't send pants without zippers and shirts without buttons. It means that those whose sacrifice is spreading the gospel ought to be loved with all the best we can, in the providence of God, give. Why don't you wear the hand-me-down or the older stuff and send something new!?

Why do we do this? Why do we bend every effort of our heart and mind and pocket book to support missionaries in manner worthy of God? Because we are partners together with the truth. Now look at it carefully. We are, both of us, sending and sent, partners with the truth.

It is a joint effort, not just between us, but with God. What a difference it makes when we see ourselves this way. You there; us here; all working together with the truth for the glory of Christ.

The Principles for God-honoring Missions

So what does this mean for the way we do missions here at the Chapel? Let me articulate several key principles that shape our vision for missions.

Our missions must involve sending.

I suppose this is obvious. But I want to say it. We will strive in our missions to be consciously sending people to all the people groups with the gospel.

Our sending is to reflect the God we are serving.

We will send in a way that makes God look great in our lives and in the lives of those going. We will lovingly sacrifice for the sake of the Kingdom. We will be sure that all we do is shaped by and for the glory of God. We will be, in our sending and supporting, a telescope that makes the supremacy of God visible to all the world.

We are to send those who are savoring God.

Listen to me. I am not talking about only sending people who believe in John Edwards or Pipers' view on Christian Hedonism. But I am saying that we must be sure that our missionaries are God centered and God besotted. The garments of their lives must be saturated with the perfume of the glory of God.

We are to send those who are going for the sake of God's Name.

We will seek to send and support missionaries whose focus is proclaiming the greatness and the glory of God to all the people groups. They will be people whose first concern is for God and not themselves. We will seek for people who are motivated by their vision of God in His Word and by His Spirit. Yes, they will be a people who see the need of the lost and are proclaiming the gospel. But they must be a people with a huge passion for God.

When we find people like this, we ought to support them.

Some are going to say to me, "I cannot think of very many missionaries like this." That makes sense. I can't think of many pastors like this. But we will declare this vision for missions and encourage others to embrace and seek with prayer and wisdom for God to bring us to people whom we can send and support.

Our philosophy of missions must see ourselves as in a joint effort for truth.

At the center of deciding who will be sent and supported will be truth. Why would we send and support someone who is not teaching the truth? Yes, we can rejoice when God sees fit to use and bless those who are faithful according to their light. But we should send and support those with whom we have a true partnership in truth.

We will affirm that truth is what missions is about. It is about proclaiming the truth of God's Word to lost and sinful people. We will do so expecting God to awaken and regenerate men and women so that they will respond by exercising the gift of faith.

Now this means some hard decisions as we grow and go in missions. This means that we will be applying a standard that few do today. But it means that those whom we send and support we will truly be fellow workers in the truth for the glory of Christ.

Conclusion

Let us send men and women in a manner worthy of God.

Let us seek those who savor God and go for the sake of His Name.

Let us sacrificially support such people as in the ministry together.