

The Divine Slingshot: When Worship, Prayer and Missions Collide

Matthew Chapter 9 says Jesus was moved with compassion as He saw the demonic harassment and oppression over the masses. The Greek word literally means a gut-wrenching sorrow or sickness to His stomach as He looked out over the nations who were “like sheep without a shepherd.”

His divine heart of love for the world could not stomach the oppression, affliction, injustice and disease, over the very ones He created in His own image for His own pleasure to display His own glory. He called his disciples together and said, “The harvest truly is plentiful, but the laborers are few. Therefore, pray to the Lord of the harvest, that He will send out laborers into His harvest” (Matt. 9:37-38).

The solution to the ache in the heart of Jesus was laborers. The problem was that there were no laborers who had yet been swept up into that torrent of compassion that was in the heart of Jesus and had gained the kind of authority in the place of prayer to be effective. So He called his disciples together and gave them a divine prescription. He told them to contend earnestly in prayer together until, like a slingshot, laborers began to be hurled out (*ekballo*) into the nations to carry His divine heart with apostolic power.

Jesus knew three things would happen when they gathered together:

1. They would see His worth (worship).
2. They would feel His heart (prayer).
3. They would be baptized with power for the assignment (prophetic).

Jesus gave them authority to cast out unclean spirits and to heal every disease and every affliction (Matt. 10:1) You can be sure Jesus wanted the disciples to connect this kind of authority to the command to earnest corporate prayer.

Communities of corporate prayer and worship become the slingshot for laborers, the kinds of laborers needed for the harvest in the nations are born, nurtured and sent from worship and prayer communities. Jesus has zeal that these laborers would reproduce this culture in every city and nation to which they are sent (Mark 14:9, Mal. 1:11).

The majority of your New Testament can be traced to a house of prayer in a city called Antioch. Many have never even heard of this prophetic community that could arguably compete with Jerusalem in terms of its implications for New Testament Christianity and lasting impact on the church in the earth.

A little history:

In Acts Chapter 1, Jesus stood on the Mount of Olives just before He ascended into heaven and gave the command to tarry in Jerusalem in prayer and worship until something happened. He pointed them back to the divine prescription of Mathew 9 that would, He promised, unleash an outpouring of the Spirit which would clothe them with power and thrust them out to declare His name and commandments in every nation.

And while staying with them, He ordered them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, which, he said, “‘you have heard from Me. For John baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now. ... But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you. And you shall be My witnesses in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth” (Acts 1:4-8).

The outpouring at Pentecost was empowerment for an impossible task with which Jesus had mandated the apostle. One small

community led by a group of fishermen, tax collectors, rebels and prostitutes would touch the entire earth with power.

“When the day of Pentecost had come, they were all together in one place. Suddenly a sound like a mighty rushing wind came from heaven, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting” (Acts 2:1-2).

Overnight, the church in Jerusalem exploded from a few hundred to a few thousand. Luke recorded this season of revival in Acts 3-5. Numbers were added daily to them, and unprecedented signs and wonders were being done at the hands of the apostles. It is clear by Acts Chapter 6 that they were just trying to manage and administrate this revival. All the while, the “to the ends of the earth” mandate, which was the purpose of this outpouring of the Spirit, had come to rest on the back shelf of the prophetic words of the apostles.

Then something transitioned in Acts 7-8.

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