

To the Church: Recover the Priority of the Gospel

When it comes to our greatest priority as followers of Jesus, it's this simple: We are here to know God and to make Him known. Or, put another way, our highest calling is to be disciples and make disciples. Nothing matters more than this.

As expressed by Jesus in the Great Commission (not the Great Suggestion), "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. 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, teaching them to observe all things I have commanded you. And remember, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20).

This is the command. This is our sacred mission.

And while it is hardly the only thing we do, the Great Commission must be our primary goal.

In the words of the Methodist leader John Wesley to his workers, "You have nothing to do but to save souls. Therefore spend and be spent in this work. And go always, not only to those that want you, but to those that want you most."

He continued, "Observe: It is not your business to preach so many times, and to take care of this or that society; but to save as many souls as you can; to bring as many sinners as you possibly can to repentance, and with all your power to build them up in that holiness without which they cannot see the Lord."

Of course, Wesley gave this directive specifically to his evangelistic workers.

He understood that moms and dads and workers and students had

many other responsibilities in life. He was hardly calling everyone to stop what they were doing and simply preach to the lost.

At the same time, the redemption and transformation of the lost must be our highest priority. It is why we are here, commissioned by Jesus Himself.

He shed His blood for a perishing world. It is our sacred responsibility to share that Good News before it is too late. Nothing matters more.

As expressed by Salvation Army founder William Booth, "On to Calvary! On to death for the world! Let us not refuse the smiters! No halting! No rest! On, suffering, sorrowing, weeping, dying for God and men, till the hosts of hell fly from their last defense, and we march on over a burning world into everlasting glory!"

No sacrifice is too great when it comes to bringing someone from eternal death to eternal life.

It is this burden and vision that has carried missionaries to the ends of the earth and church planters to the streets of our inner cities.

It is a burden for the lost, a vision for their transformation, a recognition that we are ultimately passing through this world, an understanding that we live in the light of eternity. That is a consistent theme throughout the pages of the New Testament.

As the Moravian leader Count Nicolaus Ludwig von Zinzendorf once said, "I have but one passion: It is He, it is He alone." But his devotion did not stop there. Instead, love for Jesus meant love for the lost. As he also said, "The world is the field and the field is the world; and henceforth that country shall be my home where I can be most used in winning souls for Christ."

Sadly, we have largely taken our eyes off that prize in America. We have become so consumed with politics and so obsessed with the outcome of the elections that we often talk about Trump, be it positively or negatively, more than Jesus.

We need to get our priorities in order. We need to put first things first. We must keep the main things the main things.

That means seeing our fiercest political opponents as people for whom Jesus died and who need the gospel. We can stand against their ideas and vote against their politics while caring for their souls.

That means recognizing that our ultimate enemy is not the left or socialism or a political party but the devil himself (Eph. 6:12). He is the destroyer and deluder and deceiver and the divider, and he is absolutely murderous in his intent. Our hatred of him and his ways should not become hatred of those he has misled.

Again, this does not mean abandoning politics or giving up on the culture wars. God forbid.

As one who writes five op-ed pieces a week and hosts a daily, live radio talk show, I would be the last person to give such counsel. To the contrary, for many years now, I have categorically rejected the mindset of abdication and strongly opposed the attitude of escapism.

I'm simply talking about our priorities. About our ultimate focus. About our greatest burden. Looking back a billion years from now, would anyone argue with these words?

We Have Gotten Off Track

Consider the ongoing, intense, fervent prayer for a righteous outcome to the elections, fervent prayer that I affirm and appreciate. (I was just sent a link to an election prayer meeting in Pennsylvania that was barely two hours old, and it

already had more than 126,000 views on YouTube.)

But how often do we pray like this for the lost? Or do we even believe people are lost without Jesus? And these days, are we more interested in winning a political argument or in winning someone to the Lord?

Again, I fully understand that we are called to be disciples in a holistic way. That means feeding the hungry and ministering to the poor. That means loving our spouses and caring for our children. That means being responsible employees. That means infiltrating the darkest places of society and shining like bright lights. That means playing a role in politics and the culture.

As Jesus also said, “Let your light shine before men that they may see your good works and glorify your Father who is in heaven” (Matt. 5:16).

But the fact remains that, regardless of who is in the White House two months from now, America is a mess, and there is no political solution to our problems.

Let us reset our focus and regain our burden and renew our vision. The gospel remains the hope of the nation. Let us be disciples and let us go and make disciples.

I leave you, then, with these three quotes, all cited in my 1993 book, *It's Time to Rock the Boat: A Call to God's People to Rise Up and Preach a Confrontational Gospel*.

May they pierce your heart as they have often pierce mine.

“Oh that the Lord would saturate us through and through with an undying zeal for the souls of men.” –Charles H. Spurgeon

“No Christian is in a right condition, if he is not seeking in some way to bring souls to Christ.” –C.H. Mackintosh

“I cared not where or how I lived, or what hardships I endured

so that I could but gain souls for Christ. While I was asleep I dreamt of such things, and when I waked the first thing I thought of was winning souls to Christ... All my desire is the conversion of sinners, and all my hope is in God." –David Brainerd

May God's burning heart for the lost become ours. {eoa}