

# The Mission of Christmas

The Christmas season is also our season to emphasize God's international and global mission. Today we're going to see what the two have in common. Did you know that Christmas was a cross-cultural mission if there ever was one?

For those of you who have traveled out of the country to places that were really, really different - like India or Asia - you really know how cross-cultural such a trip can be.

Food, smells, language, the way people communicate, all tells you that you are not at home.

This past year when Angi and I traveled to Israel we experienced this big time inside the city of Jerusalem. While inside the temple mount area we would come across old men and young men talking together in circles. But what was normal conversation to them, to us sounded like a fight was about to break out.

Walking through the narrow streets and seeing all the shops and the way food was sold - it's just different.

But none of us can even begin to imagine just how much of a crossing of cultures it was for Jesus, who is God, to become a man - leaving heaven to come to earth.

This was a 30+ year missionary journey, and God made the trip.

Today we're going to consider just what this trip was about, and why it is perhaps a most appropriate time for us to be learning about, giving towards, and praying over our international and global mission.

Turn in your bibles to.

This is actually one of the resurrection passages. But in it we are told of the similarity between Jesus' international mission and ours.

*<sup>22</sup>Again Jesus said, "Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you." <sup>22</sup> And with that he breathed on them and said, "Receive the Holy Spirit. John 20:21-22 (NIV)*

Notice that word "AS". That indicates similarity, right? Simile. There are some similarities between the incarnation of Jesus that is His international mission, and our international mission. I've already spoken of how both Jesus' and our mission is cross-cultural, international, and global.

And the first similarity is right there in this very passage:

### **Similarity #1: We have been similarly sent.**

The Father sent the Son and the Son sends us. We have been sent. This is John's version of the Great Commission.

But it's worth noting that we don't send ourselves. It is not *our* mission; it is Jesus' mission.

How else is His and our international mission similar?

### **Similarity #2: We are similarly empowered: By the Holy Spirit.**

Here in John 20 when He says *"so I am sending you..."* we also read that *"He breathed on them and said 'receive the holy Spirit.'"*

In Acts 1 Jesus told the disciples that *"you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit comes upon you and you shall be my witnesses."*

In Matthew 3 where we read about the message and ministry of John the Baptist and Jesus' baptism, we also read about His empowerment at the dawn of His ministry.

*As soon as Jesus was baptized, he went up out of the water. At that moment heaven was opened, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and lighting on him. 17 And a voice from heaven said, "This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased."* Matthew 3:16-17 (NIV)

The mission Jesus had was one which needed divine power from above, and ours is no different. As the Father has sent Jesus, so Jesus sends us.

### **Similarity #3: We are entrusted with the same message: The Gospel**

Jesus came preaching the Good News of the kingdom of God. The bible says He came to proclaim the Good News (or Gospel) to the poor. And the bible teaches that this gospel message, the message that man can be reconciled back to God and restored from sinful men and women to righteous men and women through Jesus, is a message that has now been entrusted to us.

Turn in your bibles to 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

*For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. 15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.*

<sup>16</sup> *So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer. <sup>17</sup> Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old has gone, the new has come! <sup>18</sup> All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: 19 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.<sup>20</sup> We are therefore Christ's ambassadors, as though God were making his appeal through us. We implore you on Christ's behalf: Be reconciled to God.<sup>21</sup> God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.* 2 Cor 5:14-21

**Similarity #4: We are similarly motivated with amazing love.**

John 3:16 says the motivation behind the Father sending the Son was what? Love! "*For God so loved the world that He gave His only Son that whoever believed in Him would not perish but have everlasting life.*"

Turn in your bibles if you will to Romans 5 where we see that God's love was the motivation for the entire advent start to finish.

Romans 5:6-8.

This is an amazing love. The love of God behind the advent of God into this world is a love for unrighteous people. Because of the sort of love that God has, He is able to look upon deplorably sinful people and still love them enough to send His Son for them.

Christ is able to look God haters, the immoral, persecutors, in the eye and die for them because of this deep motivation of divine agape love.

That is an incredible love that motivated the mission of Christ. And going back to 1 Corinthians 5, this is why Paul said in verse 14, "The love of Christ compels us...."

And that same love, believe it or not, was poured forth into us. (Go back to Romans 5:5).

So we can love sinners the way God loved sinners. And when we love sinners the way God loved sinners, we can look past the sin and love the person.

We are similarly motivated when we begin to understand how God loved and reached us.

Turn in your bibles in 1 Timothy 1. I want you to listen to the way Paul talks about this in regard to his own story.

We would all do well to have this same view of our sin as Paul did about his. We may not have committed the same acts, but we have the same disease. It all came from Adam and, at its core, sin is sin. And we were helpless to do anything about our spiritual plight. But the Good News is not helpless.

Romans 1:16 says The Gospel, the good news of God, is the power of God unto salvation to all who believe. And all who believe ultimately then become missionaries, right where we are at.

## Conclusion:

So, there are two applications for us today - depending upon where you are in your journey with God.

It's either time for you to believe and embrace the good news that God loves sinners and wants to change our lives, our character, the purpose of existence, our identity, our destiny. In other words, become a child of God and follower of Jesus Christ.

Your verse to remember is John 3:16.

Or....

If we are already His and following Christ, then it's time to embrace our mission in this world.

Your verse to remember and let work on you is John 20:21 ... *As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.*"