

Motivations for Evangelism 2

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Preacher: Rev J.A.M.Mackay

[0 : 00] what we regarded as our own definition of evangelism. Evangelism is, simply put, telling the good news of Jesus Christ to other people.

So the greatest task that the church has is to do that very thing, to tell the good news of Jesus Christ to other people, to go into all the world and to preach the gospel to every preacher. That was Jesus' last wish, if you like, to his disciples. It was his great commission and his great work that we are left with. Now we have already seen that every Christian is to be an evangelist. I have, in one sense, tried not to labour that, though in another sense I have tried to emphasise it and repeat it, simply because it is the basic, most important thing.

If Christian people, ordinary, normal Christian people, do not see themselves as evangelists, the church is not properly carrying out the commission that Jesus Christ has given to it.

[1 : 20] evangelism is not something that is to be done only by people who are trained in Bible or theological colleges. It is for the ordinary and everyday Christian.

And the Christian church will be weak to the point that we omit the great task of telling the good news of Jesus to others. Every one of us, if we are Christians, are involved.

The other main thing that we emphasised as we went along was this, that the gospel is to be taken to every person and to every place.

We have no right in the world to bypass anybody and say that there is no gospel for them. Now that is a very hard thing. But this is what Jesus told us.

That we are to preach the gospel to every creature. And that we are going to go into all the world with it. Paul himself felt a great obligation, a debt that lay on him, that he was indebted both, not only to the wise and to the learned, to the Greeks, but also to the barbarians and those who knew nothing about anything, if you like.

[2 : 38] To them and to all, he was to offer the gospel. And then last week, we looked particularly at the question of our motivation.

Because of all the problems that are involved in the work of evangelism, the greatest problem of the lot is a problem of how on earth do we get ourselves motivated to actually go and do anything about it.

Many a time we'll hear complaints that, well, yes, we have talked plenty about evangelism. You may even say this about our recent attempt to do a series on it.

That we can say plenty about evangelism. But the problem is to actually go and to take that good news and to offer it to others.

Now we saw there that the whole question of our motivation depends on our own spiritual state. It is really on what our own view of ourselves is.

[3 : 43] How well do we know ourselves? And do we know all our weaknesses and our sins and our carelessness and our uncaringness? How well do we accept these facts about ourselves?

How well also do we know our God? That he is the great God who has not only asked us to do this work but promised us to be with us in it. Now, we stress one thing.

That whatever is going to make us be evangelists, that all our motives must of necessity be Christ-centered. I think we can be involved in Christian work as professing Christian people often for the wrong reasons and with the wrong motives and perhaps for very selfish ideas of our own. But somehow or other we are doing somebody a good turn. Or whatever it may be. There are many wrong motives. But our motives to be involved in the work of evangelism must be Christ-centered.

Now, last week we mentioned a few of these. There was Christ's command. He has told us to do this work, to be involved. There was Christ's love towards us, which Paul says was a great compelling factor in his own evangelistic endeavor.

[5 : 05] There is Christ's coming. The fact that this world is not going to go on ad infinitum, just the way it is forever and forever and forever. One day, and we do not know him, but we look for his coming as soon as he pleases.

The Lord is going to come again. Jesus is coming to this world. That is a motivation. There was the judgment seat that Paul reckoned was not appointed merely for the wicked or for the unbelieving or for the godless or for the unrepentant.

But it was appointed for every man to appear before him. Now I believe that is a very strong motivation that we be involved in the work of Christ.

And also there was this, the reward that Christ promises to everyone who labors faithfully for him. He has promised that he will receive his reward.

But tonight, I want us to look again at this question of motivation. Again, I want us to think of our motivation as being Christ-centered. What is going to encourage us to be involved in the work of evangelism?

[6 : 17] Why are we going to get up and doing to serve the Lord Christ? Well, two things I want to see. I want to see the example of Christ and the promises of Christ.

These two. We have to ask ourselves when we look into the Gospels, when we read the account of Jesus of Nazareth, we have to ask the question, what is it, if we can say this without any irreverence, what is it that made this man tick?

What is it that compelled Jesus to go where he went and to do what he did? What was it that characterized and that motivated this man? What was it that determined his approach to people in bringing to them the good news of the kingdom of God?

Now, in case there is anyone here who is concerned that they, as it were, don't fit in, that they cannot call themselves Christians. Let me say now that I think there is a word also here for you.

We were thinking this morning of God's word being a speaking word and that God is speaking, that he is speaking to the world, that he is speaking to everyone who listens and that God also has a message for you within this.

[7 : 40] but I want us to think first of the motivation we have to evangelism following the example of Christ. Now, to do that, can I just ask a question?

You've heard of many missionaries, some of them more recent generations, some of them still living and working on their various mission fields, some who have been the great names who have gone before us and who have passed on into glory.

Many missionaries you know. Tell me, who do you think was the greatest missionary of all? Now, I know you could give many different answers and all of them would be legitimate up to a point.

It's not really a trick question. But the answer is one that perhaps I wouldn't automatically have thought of myself until I stopped to think. That the greatest missionary of all was God.

Because God himself sent his son into the world because he so loved the world. And he sent his son into the world that whosoever believes in him should not perish but have everlasting life.

[8 : 58] God had a great missionary concern for mankind. Now we are going to share our father's heart in the slightest. We are to share our father's concern.

And this was revealed in Jesus Christ. And he came to redeem a lost world to God. Now there is a certain gentleman who at least occasionally lectures in the seminary in Westminster in the church. And he had a very interesting ministry amongst varied types of people. But he says this, he's a lecturer in evangelism, but he says this, that we are living out of touch with God if we have no zeal for witness.

It was back, doesn't it, to what I was saying about our own spiritual state. We are living out of touch with God if we have no zeal for witness. We need to expand our vision and to align our faith with God's missionary purposes.

God is a great missionary and we have to look to God to see what God's mission is so that we can fit in and so that we can be part of that and that we can be co-workers together with God.

[10 : 19] Now there are some things, when we think about the example of Christ as we are thinking of here. Christ is our example for missionary endeavour, for evangelistic work.

There are some things about Christ that we just don't copy. We cannot copy Christ slavishly. We do not dress, for example, the way that Christ dressed. He lived in a different generation, in a different age, in a different locality from ourselves with a different culture.

We don't wear the same kind of clothes as Christ wore. neither are we asked to perform miracles because he performed miracles as the son of God to demonstrate that he was the son of God. He isn't asking us to perform miracles. And we aren't meant to copy Jesus by being crucified on the cross. Some of his followers were. You never know when it may happen, but it's less likely today. There may be other forms of insult or even people who have to face death. But we do not have to copy Christ as our example in being actually physically crucified. We are crucified with Christ in another sense.

[11 : 27] There are some things about Christ that we cannot copy. But in the matter of evangelism, and in the matter of the motivation for our evangelism, Christ is firmly set as the best living example that we have.

we must share something of the vision of this man. And we must share something of the compassion of this man.

These are the two points of the example of Christ. His vision, first of all. We have the example of Christ's vision of man. What did Jesus see when he went around, when people came flocking after him, or when he met the lonely and isolated needy individuals?

What did Jesus see in people? Well, I believe that we need to share the vision he had. He had a vision of man in his worth. He saw the value of the human individual before God.

Now, here is a message, and I said God has a message for every person. He has a message for the person who is not a Christian by profession, that God has an interest in every individual.

[12 : 44] Let us not mistake that. And God sees the value of every individual. And Jesus could see the worth of every individual that came across his path.

He asked a question once, what will a man give in exchange for his soul? Or we can properly translate that, what will a man give in place of, or in exchange for his life?

And what Jesus was saying there was just how utterly valuable any human individual is. Regardless of who they are, or of what sort of work they do in the world, they are every one of them valuable before God.

And I wonder, when we look around us, do we see the people that we normally associate with? Do we see the neighbours that live on either side of us, or all around us, as people who are in one sense before God equal with ourselves?

Do we see them as people who are valuable in the sight of God? Do we see them as people who are made in the very image of God? Because that's how Jesus saw them.

[13 : 55] He saw man in his worth. Perhaps it is that often we regard our fellow humans as just worthless, dispensable scrap that doesn't really matter, that doesn't really count.

And no wonder we're not interested in offering them the gospel. We have to see man in his worth as God sees them, as Jesus sees them. Every man is valuable, very valuable.

Christ saw it, Christ felt it. Now that is the message that God has for a person who is not a Christian. Don't write yourself off. A place like Livingston may be known as Suicide City simply because there are so many lives that have come to the end of their tetherer who have seen no point in living, no utter hopelessness and despair, that there's no value in them as individuals.

They are just things thrown into the wind. It is not true. Every man is worth so much, an incalculable amount in the sight of God.

and we have to see men in their worth if we are going to move towards them in love. We also need to have a vision of man in his need.

[15 : 14] And by that I mean not just the social needs that are so obvious around some of us. Not just the physical needs that people have from day to day. Not just the material needs that come pressing upon them.

but I'm talking about something very deep down but very real in every person's life. The spiritual need that every man, woman and child carries around with them in the world.

Now we have to face up to that sense of need. Not just for ourselves but the sense of need that others themselves possess. When Jesus looked at the people he saw these great masses of crowd he didn't discount them as just a lump of people, a lump of humanity that didn't matter and could be pushed to the side.

He saw them as people who had need. They were harassed and they were helpless. They were like sheep but they had no shepherd to lead them or to feed them.

And he saw man as he really was. I wonder when we look at the non-Christian, do we ever get that impression? And it's not a very happy one sometimes to get.

[16:25] that burden is down in our heart and we see just how lost people really are. We can look in them and maybe we see it more than they feel it at times. But do we see people as people who without Christ are eternally lost?

I want to ask another question and I want to think about it and its implications. Christians, do we really, if we are Christian people who have been redeemed to God through the blood of the Lamb, do we really believe in hell?

Do we really believe that the people that we work beside through the week, the people that we live beside, the people perhaps in our own families, our own friends, that if they do not know Christ, not only are they lost in a sense now, but they are going to be totally separated from God forever and forever.

And they will experience in that lostness and separation from God an anguish and remorse that no individual experiences on the face of this earth.

And they are going to go to a place that has been built and reserved primarily for the devil and for his angels. But there they shall go carrying the very worth and the image of God, because they have not come to know Jesus Christ.

[18:15] I believe that we see that vision. We see it at all, even the slightest. We cannot just sit and sing our psalms and keep our Christian profession as something that is between me and God as a very private issue.

It is something that calls us out. The very cries from those who are lost, even though they do not know it, calls us out to bring to them some hope in their hopelessness and to show them the way and the truth and the life in their lostness.

to question of what we do believe. Do we really believe in hell? To me, it is the most awesome subject.

It is not one I preach on very often, not because I don't believe in it, it is the opposite. It is because I do believe in it and I do not know how to bring myself to preach on such a subject.

The few descriptions that Jesus gives us are so terrible and so terrifying that we are afraid to open the book sometimes of these places because they are not just images and pictures and stories.

[19:39] They are a very, very sad reality. and we have to say this, it is not a common or indeed a popular belief but we have to say this, that every person who doesn't know Christ as their saviour is bound for that same hell and that same lostness and separation from God.

I can only say if there is anyone here tonight who doesn't know Christ, get to know Christ. Come to know him who is the way and the truth and the life.

The only one who can bring you to the Father and the only one who can bring you into the glory of heaven and save you from the horrors of hell. We need a vision of man in his need.

And we also need a vision of man in his salvation potential. Now by that I mean simply that we see people as people who can be saved.

Not as people who are bound to be lost. And it's a very different picture we have. They're the same person. They're in the same place. They've got the same attitude towards God and towards Christ and towards the gospel we offer them.

[20:56] But it's our approach to them that is so different. If we are going to people and we are automatically discounting them and stroking them off before we give them a chance or they don't know Christ and they're bound for hell.

What a callous view to hold. The other thing we can do is this. We can say well there is someone and they do not know Christ yes they are bound for hell so therefore all the more I must offer them Christ.

And we go to them as people who may be saved through the grace of Christ and the goodness of God. You see when Jesus looked out he saw people he saw like a whole harvest field of people as potentially saved people.

He didn't think of them as multitudes that were lost. So often we think in these terms we say how few there are that are to be saved. Christ said how many may be saved.

And there was a total difference in outlook. In fact he says the harvest is so great the potential is so enormous that we must pray for more and more workers to be pushed out into the harvest field.

[22 : 15] In John chapter 4 Jesus gives this picture again of the harvest. But he says there that the fields are ripe already for harvest.

They are ripe and they are ripe now. Do not say you have to wait so long. Wait so many months. The time is appropriate now for evangelism.

Some you see argue the opposite. I've heard it argued quite vehemently. That the task of the church in our own generation is just to confirm and consolidate what we have.

The time is in right for evangelism. People aren't responding to the gospel. Therefore we oughtn't to move out just now. It's a clear contradiction of the mandate that our master gives Jesus to go and always go into all the world to preach the gospel to every creature because the harvest is there and the harvest is ripe.

And the fact is that if we do not go and if we allow the harvest to go on growing it only gets over ripe and that harvest is lost to God. It's left to rot.

[23 : 28] You know Jesus' vision is a vision of the lost that drew him in the first place to that crib to that manger in Bethlehem and then drew him onwards and onwards to the cross.

Why we ask was Jesus ever born in Bethlehem? Why we ask did Jesus ever die? There was no need for Jesus to come. There was no need for Jesus to die except he had a vision of man in his lostness in his need and in his salvation potential.

And yet how blind we can be either as churches or as individuals. You know when William Carey, that great pioneer missionary, when he caught something of the vision of God that was set in front of him and he saw the need that there was to go and to preach and he saw the great responsibility of the church to be doing that thing, some of the complacent clerics of his own day said, God will convert the heathen without our help.

How complacent can we become? The fact is, yes, God can convert the heathen without our help, but he will not. God is designed to use the means that he has appointed.

How shall he hear? He says without a preacher. And if they do not hear they will never believe and if they never believe they will never be saved. God uses means, God uses men, God uses women, God uses people who see the call that is there to everyone who is a Christian.

[25 : 08] And we cannot afford to be complacent and say, well, God will do it some other way and he doesn't need me. Christ sends, Christ motivates us by asking us that we share the vision that he himself had, a vision of man in his worth, of man in his need, and of man in his salvation potential.

There is one other thing we see here from the example of Christ, which he wants to share with us, and that is his compassion. He shows his compassion for the human individual.

You see, we must not only see with our eyes, we must not only lift up our eyes and focus into that harvest field, but we must feel for the harvest field, and we must feel for the individual.

Compassion isn't something you talk about, compassion is something that you feel within yourself. It means to be moved to the very depths of our being.

I wonder sometimes how moved we are when we can talk about the great things of God, we can even talk about the drastic things of God, and remain unmoved within ourselves.

[26 : 24] What compassion is there towards the individual that knows not Christ? You see, this is what most motivated Christ. We read of him time and again in the Gospel, that when he saw the situation, he was moved with compassion.

Think, how ready are we in comparison to condemn people? How ready we are to point the finger? How ready we are to write people off before they have a chance? that Jesus felt for them.

In all the horribleness of their sin, but he still felt for them because he had compassion for the lost. I believe that until we feel for others, we will make little headway in evangelism.

It doesn't matter what methods we use, it doesn't matter what sort of teams we gather together, it doesn't matter how much time we put into it, unless we really feel for the individuals to whom we seek to bring the message of God and the good news of Christ.

For Christ has such a feeling that we read that he wept, he cried his eyes out over Jerusalem. We read in Psalm 126 that it is he who goes weeping, sowing precious seed that he shall come again rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

[27 : 51] God must break our hearts, God must bend us in such a way that we can see and feel for people and not be afraid or ashamed to cry over them, for them to bring them to God.

I think it's a sort of concern that we read in someone like a famous minister of last century, of Robert Marie McChane, who when he preached in the city of Dundee, that his vestry was watered

with the tears of his prayers, and that he used to pray before the service, and he would hear all the people coming in to take their seats, and were many of them, and he would hear these feet trampling down the aisles, and he could hear them as if they were people trampling their way into eternity, and he cried his eyes out.

But as a result of that, Murray McChane saw a rich harvest eventually, through the ministry that he exercised, we must learn to cry to God for sinners, and may our emotions not be just the superficial emotions that we can turn on ourselves because we're that way inclined, may our emotions be no more than the emotions of Christ, and may it be no less than the emotions of Christ either.

He felt for people. He was one who had compassion, and who came into this world to shed tears, and to shed blood, so that they may be saved.

May his example help us to share his vision, and his compassion. Then there is one third thing that I want us to think of as a main subject.

[30 : 08] We have thought about the example of Christ, I want us to think also as a motivation what we have in the promises of Christ. They are free, they are brief.

The first promise that we have is the promise of answered prayer. Now this I think is a particular one. It is the most important of all.

We were singing there in Psalm number two, the words of God to his only begotten son, Jesus. He says, ask of me and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance.

Christ was to come and he was to give his life as a sacrifice for many, but then he may ask God and these many would be given unto him. And you know that that is something that the father has said to the son.

It is something that God says to every one of his children now. he says, ask of me and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance. And you know with a promise such as this we have the assurance of success through prayer.

[31 : 15] I think sometimes we are afraid of even using the word success. We are afraid of talking about it as if it's something we have no right to talk about or to expect. But we can know this, of the Christ to whom we pray, the Christ who occupies the throne of God, is the Christ who is the Lord of the unsaved masses.

But he is also the master of the harvest field and of the workforce. And therefore we can pray to him because he knows the whole situation and he's in control of the whole situation.

And we can ask that Christ would give, would bring in those who are his and that God would give us souls for our efforts in the work. And I think it's necessarily true that a prayerless church lacks two labourers and a prayerless church will also fail to gather in the harvest.

Now I'm not suggesting simply or simplistically that we are a prayerless church but I am suggesting as we have shared together ourselves that we can do with much more deep prayer to God.

If we are going to see not only our own selves involved in a meaningful way in God's service but if we are going to see the church build up and we are going to see others brought in.

[32 : 49] we must pray for the lost. Ask of me God says and it's like a challenge to us ask of me and I will give you the heathen for your inheritance.

We must pray also for the Holy Spirit's power to be in us and to be upon us. If you look over to the book of Acts you see something very wonderful there.

That when the Holy Spirit came it was after the prayer meeting of the church being gathered together in the upper room. God had promised but he had also gathered the people together in prayer and there the Holy Spirit was given.

Later on in Acts we read that when they were all assembled together in one place in prayer that the very house was shaken where they were meeting. You know we need to know these experiences not for the sake of having an experience but for the sake of seeing the promises of God fulfilled to us.

the promise of answered prayer. The hymn writer says I know not by what methods rare but this I know. God answers prayer.

[34 : 01] And power from heaven is always a consequence of prayer from earth. There is another psalm which I like very much indeed.

Psalm 90 verse 16. It's a great prayer to God. O let thy work and power appear thy servants face before and show unto their children dear thy glory evermore.

And if we could take that as our own genuine and heartfelt prayer may we see that very thing. God's work and God's power among us. Jonathan Edwards the great man of God in New England he saw an essential connection between what he called extraordinary prayer and revival.

And he set up what were concerts for prayer before the revivals were ever really known or felt through that land. The connection between prayer and revival.

Now this let us take it this is a spiritual task. It is not an easy one because what we are doing here is we are battling for souls and we are taking on the enemy we are fighting the devil let us make no mistake about that.

[35 : 19] If we are going to invade the strongholds of Satan to bring back those who have been captured by him at his will he is not going to give us an easy time when we come and we plead before God that there may be many who shall see the light and be brought out of darkness and into the kingdom of God.

But we have to pray and if we have to pray with a broken heart. George Whitefield that great evangelist. Some would say he was greater than Wesley because of his theology but God used him greatly for everything and he said this give me souls or take my soul.

He couldn't bear to be someone who was going to be God's ambassador and not see God's work going before him at that very time. And I think we can pray the same.

And I wonder as I've often wondered is our problem and we have not simply because we've asked not. We can go back to Jack Miller for a minute, that man I mentioned from Westminster Seminary in the States.

He says this, that we may be very reformed in all our doctrine yet we may be heretical in the doctrine of prayer simply because we don't pray or we don't pray believing or we don't pray beseeching.

[36 : 46] You know it is, we can talk about our doctrine, we can call ourselves orthodox, conservative, Calvinistic, what you like, utterly reformed. But we may be way off the lines here if we are not calling on God to fulfill his promises through our prayers.

E.M. Bounds, who wrote books on prayer, he says this, that prayer can do anything that God can do. Think about that.

Prayer can do anything that God can do. In fact we may add this, that God can always do exceeding abundantly more than all that we can ask or think in prayer.

The more we ask, the more God will do. The promise of answered prayer. And there is also this, the promise of evangelistic success.

You see there is a general rule built into God's kingdom and it's this, that your labour, whatever it is, if it's in the Lord, it is never in vain. Your labour cannot be futile in the Lord.

[37 : 59] Now here I think we need to crept our theology of expectancy and our theology of success. Psalm 126 says that if we go sowing and reaping, then we shall return again rejoicing and bringing our seeds with us.

It's built in, it's essential consequence. There is no such thing as non-success with a faithful worker in God's kingdom. Jesus sees, and he says it again as a kind of challenge, he says follow me and I will make you fishers of men.

But first of all the thing is you've got to follow me. But if you follow me, you'll be fishers. And that doesn't mean you'll be sitting there at the side of the lake with a net in your hand.

It means this, that you'll actually go and catch them. You follow Jesus, you will catch fish, catch men for him. Back to William Carey, who says the well-known words, expect great things from God.

Attempt great things for God. There is a promise of evangelistic success. And there is in a word, in evangelism, the promise of Christ's own presence.

[39 : 20] You know, that is not a small thing. It was part of what Jesus gave when he said, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the ages. He was sending them out on a desperate task, a desperate mission, to invade the strongholds where the devil ruled and where darkness reigned.

But he said, go and preach this message of good news. The kingdom of God has come near you. Christ can save you. Go and declare it. And don't be afraid, because I am with you always, even to the end of the ages.

you know, it's not some empty sentiment, but it's a grand and powerful response to our need that Jesus gives us, his promise.

And the promise is linked, not just to our general work of day life, it is linked in particular to the task of evangelism. it's when we go that he says, lo, I am with you.

I think often we do not know the presence of Christ, because we are not engaged in that particular work of Christ. It's hard work, but that's why Jesus gives the promise.

[40 : 31] It's when we go in our loneliness, it's when we go in our own weakness, it's when we try to speak for Jesus a word in fear and in trembling, and we feel our own hopelessness and our own stupidity and our own emptiness.

So then Jesus says, lo, I am with you. I think if we seek to carry out the commission that our captain has given us, then we can rely on this promise, and we will know his presence with us.

We have the example of Christ, his vision and his compassion. We have the promises of Christ, the promise of answered prayer, the promise of evangelistic success, the promise of Christ's presence in the world.

May these be sufficient motivations for us to do what Jesus asks us to do. May God bless his word to every one of us. Shall we join in prayer?

Our God as we are gathered here tonight, you know just what is in our thoughts, you know the particular tremblings of our hearts, Lord you know if our hearts do not tremble at all and we are careless about what you are asking us to be and to do, and Lord you know us even if we do not know you.

[42 : 07] Lord if there are any here who are not part of your kingdom and who do not know Christ, we ask that they may come this night to Jesus and that the promise for them may be if any man comes to me I will in no wise cast him out.

And Lord may each of us in our own sense of need and weakness come. And in coming to Christ may we not only come to know your light and your love and your salvation but come so that we may go and share that same light and love and salvation to those who do not know you.

Give us Lord your vision, give us your compassion and may we know your promises. In all that we seek to do for this we ask in Jesus name.

Amen. Psalm 126 Let us sing the whole psalm to God's praise.

When Zion's bondage God turned back as men that dreamed were we then filled with laughter was our mouth our tongue with melody.

[43 : 30] And as we sing this may we sing it with praise to God and may we sing it with that longing and that hopefulness that we may indeed know this times of not only going and sowing but the times of returning and weeping.

May God help us to sing to you please. Amen. Amen.