

The Ability of Glorify

So were here at SHEC have mission statement, and that mission statement is to “Engage our city and the Nations with the treasure of Jesus.” I think this is a pretty legit mission statement. Personally I think it rocks, but the truth is I do not want to be known for our mission statement, I want to be known for our mission.

This slogan will just be words on paper, and a nice catch phrase unless we as a group truly take up a cause and engage the city of Missoula with a passion promoting the only hope that the world has ever known, that being Christ, his life death and resurrection.

There is kind of this buzz word that is floating around in evangelical circles today called “missional,” I love it, I use it a lot, but when we try to define missional we find the definition is not as straightforward as we hoped.

See what is missional in Missoula Montana, may not be as missional when placed in the context of Poplar Montana. The end goal for the mission is the same, but the way in which we achieve that goal is different.

In fact even South Hills Evangelical Church has a different style of mission than the individuals who make up South Hills Evangelical Church. You mission differently than the corporate church missions. Different tactics, different settings, same goal.

So today we are going to look at a story today in the gospel of John and the story is one with a very bold statement in it. But as we look at the statement we will see that regardless of who you are, where you are, and what style of mission you choose, mission stems out of two things: a full understanding of the gospel in you, and a total love for those around you.

This is our genesis for mission. If you get those two things right, your mission will follow, and by God’s grace it will be effective.

Now that is the goal, but let me tell you the means to how we are going to figure this stuff out today. We are going to come to a conclusion, I hope today, that causes us to joyfully serve and give glory to God in all circumstances, but we are going to get there by talking about pain.

No for many people pain is the largest road block in their understanding of Christ. And let me be real with you guys right now, it is a legitimate question to be asked. Because if we sit back and claim as Christians that we serve a good God, who does good things, who does good for his people and who is not limited in his power in any way shape or form; why then does that God not use his unsurpassed power to save us from pain?

If God truly is a good God, why does he allow his people to not live in uninterrupted goodness?

Is it because our God is oblivious to what is going on? Do we serve a God who has the

concentration level of a 14 year old girl with an unlimited texting plan?

Or do we serve a God who pulled a bait and switch on us and promised all these good things to us but really has no intention of living those things out?

These are all legitimate questions that deserve legitimate answers. Let me put this in perspective here, just in the city of Missoula in the last nine months, father, mothers, brothers, sisters and friends have buried five teenagers due to accidents: five terrible incidents which produced much pain and raised many questions.

This is why it is so important for us as Christians to be in love with our Bibles and to have daily fellowship with God. **1 Peter 3:15** says that you need to be able to answer these questions with gentleness and respect. And before I get going any more into providing an answer for these questions let me tell you an answer that we as humans sometimes hate using, but one that works wonders: I don't know.

Now keep that answer and that verse in mind, but first let's **Pray**.

Ok let's read our story in the book of John today and then we will start our answer seeking process.

John 9:1-12

Alright, so interesting thing to note was the question that the disciples asked Jesus in verse two: "Rabbi, who sinned, this man or his parents that he was born blind." Because there was a belief that was held back then that cases of disabilities were the punishment of a sin. Now since this man was born blind, it would have to mean that either his parents committed a major sin, or somehow in utero the child sinned.

This thought process is not true. Jesus will clarify this in a minute. It is true that all sickness and disease is a result of sin, Genesis three makes that clear, when sin entered the world, death came with it. But illness, disease and calamity is not always a sign of a punishment of sin. Especially for those who are in Christ, we know this because we know Romans 8:1, there is now therefore no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

Now I would bet that if it were the Pharisees who answered this question Jesus would have answered in a different way because you can learn a lot about where someone is coming by the tone of their question.

You will find this when dealing with pain especially, there are those people who ask hoping to find answers, and those who ask hoping to find reason to disbelieve. This question from the Pharisees could have been used to trap Jesus: "Jesus, who *sinned*, this man or his parents?" But look at the tone that the disciples most likely used here. "Jesus, who sinned that this man is born blind."

See, even in God's sovereignty, it is ok to question God. The disciples did it, Jesus did it at Gethsemane before his death, God delights in answering his people, but tone makes a difference.

Anyway the disciples ask, Jesus answers then he goes to the man, whose identity is that of a blind beggar, and he spits on the ground, makes mud, and tells the man to go wash in the pool of Siloam. It's interesting to note that Siloam means sent. Sent if we take sent as an acronym we see that it is salvation exists for necessary transformation. Just kidding, I have no idea why sent is in there, sometimes I just think God throws some hanging curveballs in the Bible just to stress out theologians and have them over analyze things.

Anyway, Jesus makes his lugi pie and the man washes his face, receives his sight for the first time in his life, returns to Jesus, doesn't find him but all the people who once knew him as a blind beggar are now amazed and unable to recognize him because he is fundamentally different.

I think that is interesting to note, the man's eyes were opened. It's not as if he had leprosy and his skin was restored, or if he was missing a limb and it was regenerated, it was simply that the body that he once had was now able to see and yet the side effect of that transformation was so intense that the same body was unrecognizable by those who knew him as a blind beggar because now he was granted a new life because of the work of Christ.

Now this is a happy story, the man was healed, Jesus was sought after, glory was given and that makes sense because Jesus said that would happen in verse **3**.

But it's easy to look at that verse when the person is healed, but what happens when they are not healed, what happens to the other blind man across the city who was born blind and who dies blind. What happens to those born with mental disabilities and physical problems and who are never healed, what then is the hope that we share with them?

It would be great if life were a Disney movie and the bad guys always got caught and the good guys were always restored. But that's not the world we live in. We live in a broken world.

So what hope can we give? Look back at verse **3**. The answer is the same. The hope we give to the broken is that God still uses you for his glory. The truth is, regardless of if that man in the story was healed or not, he had the capacity to give God glory, and it just so happened that his current state of weakness enhanced his ability to give God glory.

You see here is the thing about God: everything he does is on purpose. It is no accident that you were born the way you are, it is no accident that you will die the way you die, but it is for the strict purpose of giving the glory to God, that is our goal in life.

Look at **Isaiah 43:6-7**. What did we just see, that God created you...for his glory. And that

God...formed and made you.

We see that even more clearly in the story of Moses. God appears to Moses and says, "Hey go speak to the most powerful man in the world and tell him that you are going to take his entire labor force from him."

And Moses is all like, "Whoa hold on, I can't go and speak to Pharaoh, I have speech impediment and I am not able to do what you called me to do."

Do you remember what God said to him, **Ex 4:11-12**. Go, God made you that way and God will give you voice. Doesn't mean you won't stutter, doesn't mean you will speak like a pro, but it means God is going to use the vessel he created for the purpose for which it was created.

Colossians 3:3 says "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God."

Do you see that? When you become a Christian your life switches hands, it no longer is yours but instead it is hidden in God. A Good and great, marvelous God. The beautiful bottom line is, your life isn't about your life anymore, it's about God's.

Now remember when we looked at that 1 Peter verse and it said to give an answer for the hope you have in gentleness and respect? This doesn't constitute a gentle answer when someone comes up and asks for encouragement and prayer for cancer: "It's not about you so deal with it."

Now I am not a fan of Christian radio. Therefore it is not my life goal in life to be associated with Christian radio. But I had to call in to a station the other day to do a plug for our city wide youth event. And while I was on hold I heard that they were taking calls about bullying and one mom called in and said that her daughter needed to just "rise above it." I laughed a little in my head because according to her statement, her daughter needed to simply put up with meaningless bullying until she died, and then she would get her reward. A true message of hope.

The DJ then finally got me, did his little interview and then totally bait and switched me and was like "Hey pastor Tyler, what do you have to say to all the people out there dealing with bullying." So in my head I prayed, "Lord save me from myself." But what I ended up saying, by God's grace was a gentle answer laden with the hidden truth of "It's not about you."

I said if your goal in self worth is the worthiness and acceptance of yourself, you will never attain it. That's the whole plot line of the new testament epistles. Let people mock you ridicule you persecute you all they want so long as Christ is exalted. I'm not going to defend myself, because I no longer live for myself. I was raised with Christ, I put on Christ, Christ is now my identity not this fallen physical body.

See all pain is a byproduct of sin not necessarily a punishment for your sin, but simply the result of living in a sinful society. But what happens when you are saved? Your sin is defeated you become redeemed, and it is more than just a spiritual redemption, but it is also a physical

redemption. Your body now screams the worth of your savior no matter your current condition. That earlier passage we read in Isaiah, the one where we see God created us for his glory, he formed and made us, it continues in **Isaiah 43:8-9**.

Bring out the blind, who yet have eyes, the deaf, who yet have ears. That is physically impossible, but in Christ all things are possible. What that verse proves is that through the cross, Jesus reconciled the spiritually dead to life and in the physical realm he discounted disabilities. There is no such thing as an empty body.

I had the opportunity to go to a young life camp with some of my youth kids a few years ago. At the camp was also a division of young life campers from what they call "Capernaum" which is their ministry to the mentally and physically disabled. Full disclosure here: when I arrived at camp, my heart sank. I said how am I supposed to have fun on the ropes course and relax when I am constantly being reminded that some people can't do that.

But as the camp progressed how the Lord changed my heart. One of the leaders there was a young man by the name of Sam who had cerebral palsy. He couldn't walk right, and even with a walker he barely hobbled to and fro places, typically he sat in his wheel chair. He had glasses and an eye that pointed in the wrong direction, and when he spoke he sounded like the Tasmanian devil in looney tunes, a pretty much indiscernible mess. But one thing that couldn't be hidden was his joy. Sam was always smiling, always scooting along and laughing.

I remember one moment that forever changed the way I view disabilities. We were sitting in a leaders prayer group, and all the leaders were praying, and there was a silence, and the Sam started to pray, I have no idea what ninety percent of his prayer was, but one line we all heard very clearly, "Dear God, thank you for your son."

And it hit me like a ton of bricks, that Sam, a five foot four, cognitively limited, physically lacking Christ follower in a wheel chair, just our performed a 6'2" fully operational pastor in the most important activity every, giving glory to God.

There was a purpose that Sam was the way he was, and he chose to live inside, bearing the pain and momentary discomfort for the eternal goal of seeing Christ and the immediate reward of living in his presence.

2 Cor 12:9-10.

What a condemning, restoring, convicting and encouraging verse. For the sake of Christ the man in the story was born blind. For the sake of Christ Jesus healed him. For the sake of Christ his new body pointed to his new identity.

For the sake of Christ we are content with pain because we serve a God who redeems all for his glory. "And we know that for those who love God, all things work together for good, for those who are called according to his purpose." (Rom 8:28).

What a love, what a gospel, what a grace, what a God.

You know what's more beautiful, is the combination of the truths, it is beautiful that God disables disabilities and works with a purpose through all his people. But it's even more beautiful to reflect on the fact that no matter what state your body is in, you were once disabled spiritually and God redeemed you.

You were once dead, unable to take care of yourself, unable to change your condition, and yet Christ came to you.

I'm going to draw a spiritual line from a physical healing in the story in John simply because the Bible allows it in this case. It is of no coincidence that one of the most recorded miracles is of sight being received.

Jesus is our light.

But look back into the story. When did the blind man cry out to Jesus? He didn't. Jesus went to him. The blind man uttered no words until after Jesus healed him. Silently he stood as the savior made mud and applied it to his eyes, silently he washed, but visibly and vocally he returned, proclaiming that the man named Jesus healed him.

The gospel levels the playing field. You are no different than any other believer, you just have a different skill set for the same cause. Worship.

That spurs us to mission. Because now we love everyone as Christ loved us, unconditionally. We proclaim the healing that Christ did for us because we too want people of all states to come to Siloam and was in the blood of Christ so that they too can be redeemed by the blood that washes away sin.

God's purpose is to use you in your existing state, in your existing location for his glory. It is by that hope, through that grace and with this word that we engage our city and nations with the treasure of Jesus.