



## The mission of Jesus, the mission of YOU

### Why am I here?

Have you ever thought about why you are here? I don't mean in an I'm-having-a-breakdown-what's-the-point-of-life way, but as a genuine question: what is my purpose? A few years ago I was asked to do this very thing – to write my own mission statement. It's something organisations, charities even churches do. But not so often that we think about this as individuals. Why are YOU here? What shape has God made you? How can you know what's wise to say yes and no to (I'm still working on that one)?

Before we attempt to answer that question, we're going to start with Jesus – why was he here? What was his mission? And what does it have to do with us?

### What was Jesus' mission?

Near the start of his ministry, Jesus goes to a synagogue in his home town and quotes a well known passage from Isaiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, for he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim that captives will be released, that the blind will see, that the oppressed be set free, and that the time of the Lord's favour has come." (Luke 4:18, quoting Isaiah 61:1) He tells the people listening that this scripture has been fulfilled. They didn't believe him, but that's a story for another day.

Jesus meant what he said. Let's take a look at the things he did with his time on earth, and see what we can learn from them.

### How did he fulfil his mission?

*He gathered a small group of disciples and lived his life with them.* Normally to become a Rabbi's disciple, you would have to go through years of study and rigorous testing – imagine getting into Oxford or Cambridge university. But Jesus didn't do it that way. The first disciples we hear Jesus call were fishermen in their family business – and if they were working that meant they weren't studying at Rabbi school (that's not really what they called it). He chose them. They hadn't passed all the tests, but they were good enough for Jesus. They messed up repeatedly over the 3 years he spent with them, but he didn't give up. He taught them, he ate with them, he journeyed with them, he trusted them to continue his work when he was gone. Good News.

*He spent time with people who were on the edge of society.* People like the woman at the well – a woman so side-lined that she went to fetch water in the middle of the day (everyone else went early in the morning before the sun was blisteringly hot), or Zaccheus – the "despised" tax collector who Jesus chose to visit. And when Jesus spoke to those people something in them changed. Captives released. The oppressed set free.

*He explained scriptures (and life!) in ways people hadn't thought of before.* Oh I would have loved to have been in the crowd during the sermon on the mount – Jesus saying "you have heard it said" then starting to quote a well known verse, and me being ready to quote the rest of it (feeling very smug of course) then Jesus says "But I say". Have you noticed he does that? Have a look through Matthew 5 if you don't believe me. Like this one: "You have heard the law that says Love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say, love your enemies! Pray for those who persecute you!" Matthew 5:43-44. Where there had been a message of getting even, now comes a message of grace. Good News.

*He healed people who were sick.* Blind people, lame people, people with leprosy. People others wouldn't touch. People who had no prospects in life and were forced to beg on the side of the road because there wasn't anything to support them. He gave them hope and a future. Captives released. The blind given sight. Oppressed set free.

As if all that wasn't enough to fulfil his mission, *He died and rose again.* People needed time with Jesus. People needed to understand the scriptures better. People needed health and a future. But more than ANYTHING, people needed God's grace. And all of that is just as true today. To get a picture of Jesus' mission, we have to look at his life AND his death AND his resurrection. His death which tore the curtain in the temple, so that we could experience God's presence anywhere. So that we don't have to follow hundreds of rules about eating and handwashing and menstruating – but we can live by grace. His resurrection which showed that nothing we can do, nothing anything or anyone in the cosmos can do, can stop God. His goodness will overcome pain. His light will overcome the darkness.

### **Err... still... Why am I here?**

The term "Christians" was first used by political leaders in Antioch, not by Christians themselves. It was really used to mock them, talking about them as "little Christs". That's what the first Christians aspired to be, and God is still calling us to be little Christs in our world today. The same Spirit that Jesus spoke about lives in you. So God calls you to join in with his mission – to partner with him in bringing good news to the poor, proclaiming that captives will be released, that the blind will see, the oppressed set free, and the time of the Lord's favour has come. What does that mean in your context? It might look very different in your life to my life. And you're probably not going to work it out from quickly reading this blog. I'm not going to end with any answers, but here are some questions which might help you make a start:

- What have I done in the past year where I was able to join in with Jesus' mission? How could I do that/those things more often?
- Who are the people who I most want to know God's good news, and see set free from oppression?
- What skills has God given you which could be used to serve those people?

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