

Jesus' Mission Statement

1-27-2013

Luke 4:14-21

14 Jesus returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit, and news about him spread through the whole countryside. 15 He taught in their synagogues, and everyone praised him. 16 He went to Nazareth, where he had been brought up, and on the Sabbath day he went into the synagogue, as was his custom. And he stood up to read. 17 The scroll of the prophet Isaiah was handed to him. Unrolling it, he found the place where it is written: 18 "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, 19 to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor." 20 Then he rolled up the scroll, gave it back to the attendant and sat down. The eyes of everyone in the synagogue were fastened on him, 21 and he began by saying to them, "Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing."

I consider myself blessed to have been a school teacher for 30 years. The first seventeen, I taught high school and the last thirteen, I taught at Pitt Community College. The bulk of my career, I taught people how to be electricians. Well, at least I taught them the technical side of electricity. To actually become an electrician, is something they had to have the desire to do. And I think that is true with any profession. To be successful, you have to have the desire and drive to work in that field and do it to the best of your ability. I enjoyed working in the shop environment in the schools. I'm not sure I would have been a successful teacher on the high school level if I had been teaching an academic subject like math, English, or history. As a shop teacher, I had to lecture a certain amount of time to introduce certain theoretical aspects of the trades, however, we, my students and myself, spent probably 75% of the time in a laboratory or shop type environment. The students were in the lab working on projects designed to teach them the hands on skills along with the technical skills necessary to be successful. That allowed us a lot of time to talk with each other, to I guess you could say bond with each other. It also gave me the time to teach, most of the time without them being aware of it, life lessons that would help make them better citizens and hopefully better people. I continued with that teaching model when I moved to the community college and was successful in the classroom there also. I moved to the college in 91 as an instructor. I worked my way from an instructor to a curriculum coordinator, from a curriculum coordinator to a department chairman. In 98, I became the Dean of the Construction and Industrial Technology Division. For all practical purposes, being a dean took me out of the classroom on a daily basis. During the first six years I taught at the college I took several seminars. One of them was Steven Covey's 7 Habits of Highly Effective People. The seminar had a profound effect of my life, which we don't have time to go into this morning. As a result of the impact it had on my life, I took additional training, and became certified by the Franklin Covey Institute to teach that seminar to other people. A course based on the seven habits was developed at the college and actually became required in several curriculums. The six years I spent as a Dean at the college, I was able to teach one section a semester of that course. During one of the habits, actually habit 2, Begin With the End in Mind, we taught our students what a personal mission statement was and taught them how to write one.

At this point, I'm going to stop talking about what I consider a successful career in in the field of education. What I will tell you, is that as successful as I was professionally, I was just as unsuccessful personally. Well, at least until I looked at myself away from work and began to make some changes in my personal life. One of the first changes I made, was to write a personal mission statement. Then I began to live by that mission statement. It made a significant difference in my personal life.

Just what is a mission statement? I chose a couple of definitions so you could get an idea. From www.entrepreneur.com: "A mission statement defines what an organization is, why it exists, its reason for being. At a minimum, your mission statement should define who your primary customers are, identify the products and services you produce,..." From Wikipedia: "A mission statement is a statement of the purpose of a company, organization or person, its reason for existing. The mission statement should guide the actions of

the organization, spell out its overall goal, provide a path, and guide decision-making. It provides "the framework or context within which the company's strategies are formulated." I like the Wikipedia definition better because it includes people in its definition. It also includes several key statements: The mission statement should "guide the actions...provide a path...guide decision making". That's great, so now we have a definition; but why do I need a mission statement? Invariably that would be one of the first questions a student would ask me when I started talking about them writing a personal mission statement. Here was my stock answer: My wife and I are going on vacation in August. If you can tell us how to get there, I will give you \$100.00. The next question was immediately where are you going? You're absolutely right, that's why you want to write a mission statement. It helps you get where you are going. If you don't know where you want to go, then how are you going to get there? Where do you want to be in 5 years, 10 years, 20 years? How do you plan to get there?

Mission statements aren't new. They aren't something Stephen Covey dreamed up when he wrote his book. Mission statements go way back. Successful people have always had mission statements. They may not have written them down, but they knew where they wanted to go, and they mapped out a way to get there. They had a plan, something to guide their path, to guide their actions, and something to help them make decisions.

Jesus had a mission statement. We heard that statement this morning. Well, Jesus didn't actually sit down and write that mission, but he did read it. Listen to verse 18 of this morning's scripture lesson: **"The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free,**

There it is, Jesus' Mission statement: **to proclaim good news to the poor; proclaim freedom for the prisoners; recover sight for the blind; set the oppressed free.** Isn't that exactly what Jesus spent the last three years of his life doing. Let's spend a few minutes talking about Jesus' Mission Statement. First, To proclaim good news to the poor: Jesus didn't come to make us all middle class Americans with a three-bedroom house and a two-car garage. He didn't come to end poverty or balance the socio-economic classes. Yet, Jesus did come to free us from our poverty. Many of us don't see the poverty we are living in. We recognize monetary poverty. We see poverty in west Greenville. We see poverty in those children we sent the shoeboxes full of toys. We see poverty in those on the television for whom donations are made. We see poverty in those who are homeless and without sufficient nutritional or medical care. What we have trouble seeing is the spiritual poverty in our own hearts. Yet we know who Jesus is but have trouble sharing the good news of Jesus with others.

Second, Jesus came to proclaim freedom for the prisoners. I don't think He was talking about the murderers, the rapist, the arsonist, the drug dealers, and the like. No, he was talking about freeing each of us from our own prisons. Many of us are in our own personal prisons and don't know that there is a way out through Jesus Christ. Some of us are prisoners to fear, to worry, to guilt, to regret, to self-righteousness, to our own need to control others. These prisons separate us and isolate us from God and from our fellow man. These prisons are just as real as the prisons that hold the criminal element. But that is why Jesus came, to set us free from our personal prisons. Through Jesus Christ, we each may have freedom.

Third, Jesus came to recover sight for the blind. How blind are we to the lessons and messages of God? How many of us blindly sing the hymn, Open My Eyes, That I May See? I love the chorus of this song: Silently now I wait for thee, ready my God thy will to see. Do we really? Jesus came to recover sight for the blind. How blind are we to the lessons he taught? Why do we turn a blind eye to what is going on around us every day? Do we really mean the last line of that hymn we sing: Open my eyes illumine me, spirit divine.

And, the fourth piece of Jesus' Mission statement; To set the oppressed free. But who are the oppressed? We are. You and I are the oppressed and we are oppressed by those very things that imprison us. And Jesus came to set us free from fear, from worry, from guilt, from regret, from self-righteousness, from our own need to control

others, from sin. Yes, Jesus came to free us from sin. To open the door to a world of freedom from all those things that would separate us from God. Isn't that the definition of sin: anything that separates us from God. And that's why Jesus came, to free us from anything that separates us from God.

I would ask each of you to consider something this morning. I would ask that each of you consider working on a personal mission statement. Some of you may already have one. If so, that's great. But, at the same time, I can almost hear some of you thinking: OK, Guerry, I'm doing just fine. Why do I need a mission statement? Think about this: where do you plan to be in five years. How about ten or twenty? I'll use myself as an example: I'm 63, in 20 years if I'm lucky enough to last that long, I'll be 83. Where do I see myself then. What do I see myself doing when I'm 83. What would I hear my friends saying about me? What would I hear God saying about me? Would I be pleased with what God had to say about my day-to-day life? If not, what changes do I need to make in my life starting today? I don't care how young you are or how old you are; none of us are perfect. None of us are the Christians we could be. I tell you what, let's not worry about 20 years from now. However, I think it is fair to say that most of us plan to be here for at least another year. So let me ask this, where do you plan to be next year? How do you plan to get to that point? Have you made Jesus a daily part of that plan? As a Christian, isn't Jesus Christ supposed to be a part of your daily life? If you have a mission statement, is Jesus part of it? Jesus Christ had a mission statement. He knew who he was and where he was going. If you don't have one, maybe you could adopt His:

Maybe you could:

proclaim good news to the poor;
proclaim freedom for the prisoners;
recover sight for the blind;
set the oppressed free.

It was good enough for Christ, I bet He wouldn't mind if you used it too.