

Philosophy of Ministry Lendy Bartlett

I believe that mission or “outreach” is not a facet of the church. It is bound up within the identity of the Triune God. God sent the Son. The language of the Father sending the Son is seen often in the Gospel of John. (John 3:17; John 5:30 John 17:8). And, Jesus sends the Spirit. He promises in John 14 and delivers in Acts 2. Now the Spirit of God indwells the church. As a result of the nature and character of our “sending” God, *being* a sent people is bound up in who we are as His people recreated in the image of Jesus.

Ministry is incarnational. John 1:1 says, “The Word was with God and the Word was God. And, in John 1:14, “The Word became flesh and dwelled among us.” Just as Jesus was God’s hands and feet in the world, the church is the body of Christ being the hands and feet of Jesus in the world.

Thus, as his hands and feet we are called to continue seeking the ongoing establishment of God’s Kingdom. In Mark 1:15 Jesus said, “Repent and believe in the Gospel, the Kingdom of God is at hand.” He taught that the good news is that God’s Kingdom is now available. It’s at our fingertips because of Jesus’ life, ministry, death, and resurrection. The Gospel is primarily proclamation that we have been delivered from sin and death.

The church must not conflate the preaching of deliverance with works. At the same time, we do not want to separate those works from preaching. We have been saved by grace *for good works*. (Ephesians 2:8-10) The signs that Jesus performed were evidence that the Kingdom was at hand. Jesus preached the nearness of the Kingdom and that was evidenced by his teaching, preaching, healing etc.

Therefore, the church is called to be the first *signpost* of God’s present Kingdom. We look to Scripture to ground the soul of the Church. And, we look to the Holy Spirit to shape us into a holy missional people in Christ that reflect the nature of our great God to the world and back to God to and for his glory.

Ministry must be holistic. In what we call “the Fall” four relationships were severed: 1. Our relationship with God as we tried to hide from God! 2. Our relationship with ourselves; because of shame we saw our nakedness and sought to cover. Now we live with that pain. 3. Our relationship with each other, prior to the Fall Adam Eve were naked and not ashamed. Now, instead of being focused on the other, we’re focused on ourselves. 4. Our relationship with creation; we are at odds (thorns and thistles) affecting our capacity to work rightly, for example.

Ministry seems to me to be about seeking healing, by the power of the Spirit, in all of these areas. We want to relentlessly refuse to neglect any one dimension: heart, soul, mind, body, and social context. Further, the church will need to see her self in this brokenness as we reach out. We are “cracked pots” “insufficient for the task” letting the Spirit of God use us to offer the same kind of healing Jesus is doing in us through us to the world around us again all to the glory of God.