

blessed by Jesus touching part of his. Zacchaeus was so short that he could not see Jesus because of the crowd (Luke 19:1-10). That did not keep him from seeing Jesus. He did not wait, hoping to be able to get closer, but ran and climbed into a sycamore tree. He was rewarded immediately by Jesus who was willing to abide in his house.

We as Christians often stay far from Jesus because we feel we are so small, or have so little to offer. Instead of trying to get closer to God and Christ, we complain of our inabilities, and thus drift farther away. If we would only look into our hearts and then about us, we can find many things to draw us close to God.

Zacchaeus was already giving half of his possessions to the poor. He

was willing to repay anyone he had cheated four times the amount. Probably there are few Christians who give half to the poor or any other good cause, such as preaching the gospel, reaching out to others to win them to Christ, helping the lonely or doing anything else that is sacrificial for Christ. Unlike the man who wanted to build more barns for his treasure, he was willing to give much to follow Jesus (Luke 12:13-21). We should be willing to do this when we see the need.

The three primary lessons from these publicans are: Matthew was ready to leave all in order to follow Jesus. If necessary, we must be willing to leave all. The praying publican showed his humility and reverence for God. We should always be humble and reverent.

Zacchaeus' eagerness and resourcefulness in making sure he was near Jesus is worthy of our attention. We should have a strong desire to be near our Savior and serve Him.

These three publicans can serve as examples to us as we strive to live for Christ. Think seriously about this: If we do not demonstrate these traits found in the lives of these three publicans, we are less than Christ would have us be. Christ's wisdom and compassion in reaching out to these men should help us to look beyond mere labels and understand a person's real character and worth and thus help him to come to Christ and serve Him. ~

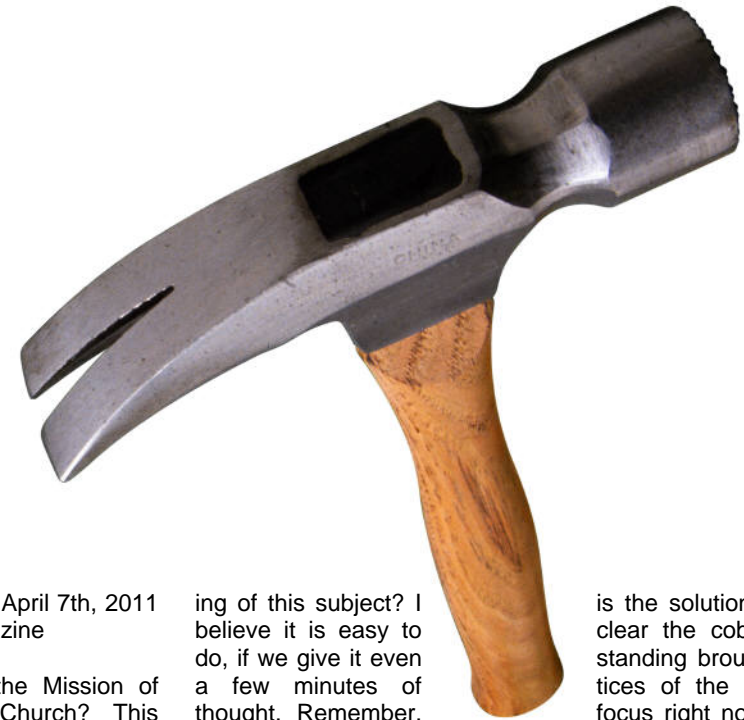
Tomijo Brown

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Doing the First Works: The Mission of Christ and His Church



By Marc Smith, on April 7th, 2011 in Watchman Magazine

What Exactly IS the Mission of Christ and His Church? This seems like such an obvious question, yet there is so much confusion about such a simple and straight forward question. Is it possible to quickly walk through the clear steps listed in scripture, the book, chapter and verse, so to speak, to make easy understand-

ing of this subject? I believe it is easy to do, if we give it even a few minutes of thought. Remember, every Christian is supposed to be able to describe this (1 Peter 3:15). Have you felt guilty because you never gave this even a little time to work this out?

Remove the guilt right now! Here

is the solution: Let us attempt to clear the cobwebs of misunderstanding brought on by the practices of the religious world and focus right now only on what the word of God actually says. Go with me step by step so that you can follow what God has told us is the truth about this subject. About 15 minutes of your time is really all you need. If you want to avoid any confusion DO NOT Google this subject! Your New Testament

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Morning Worship Service ___ 10:00 AM
Evening Worship Service ___ 6:00 PM

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Bible Class for all ages ___ 7:00 PM

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is the only source you will need to establish the truth of God's word in your understanding.

A. It all starts with Jesus and His original purpose in coming in the way He did, born as a human being (declared by God – Matthew 17:5, Jesus is to be heard – remember, Jesus is the "Word" – John 1:1-5; 1 John 1:1-7, He came into this world to save mankind from being lost in sin. He is also the Creator who spoke all things into existence in Genesis 1, and amazingly, at the judgment He is to be our judge as well – John 5:22). Enduring the same temptations as any man, yet without sinning (Hebrews 4:15), He was to be the perfect sacrifice, ending the old law which required animal sacrifices every year to put away the sins of the Jews under the old law (the law of Moses which was for the Jews only but is "nailed to the cross" and a new law is now in effect – Colossians 2:11-14). This is also why the New Testament is THE ONLY LAW to which all of mankind is now responsible. The old law, i.e. the Old Testament is only for our learning and is not applicable for law or prophecy in our age.

B. By His death, burial and resurrection from the dead, Christ had accomplished His goal to save the souls of all of mankind by the means of hearing the word of God, having faith in Christ, to turn from sins, confessing the name of Christ and be baptized for the remission of sins. – Acts 2:36-41; 8:35-39; 1 Peter 3:21. In this way the mission of Christ has been achieved: the only way for the souls of man to be saved from eternal damnation – Acts 4:12; 14:27

C. The beginning of the Church of Christ – Acts 2:42-46. Once we have met the conditions to receive salvation we are added by the Lord Himself – Acts 2:47; 1 Peter 2:5.

D. Membership in a local church is required, following the example of Saul of Tarsus – Acts 9:27-29. We are to worship every first day of the week with the local church – Acts 20:7, and we are to submit to the leadership of the local church we are members of and help in this way to maintain the discipline of the church – Acts 20:28; 1 Peter 5:2-3

E. Many of us are constantly amazed at the way religion in the name of Christ is shown all around us. The religious world of our time evidently does not know what the mission of the New Testament Church is to be. What is now the established order and what we see everywhere we look are denominational groups enthusiastically being involved in and funding literally everything they can imagine and doing these things in the name of God without ever seeming to worry about whether their efforts are actually of God or not. Without the authorized will of God from His word, such religions (invented at the whims of men), still claim that "their God" would endorse them – Colossians 2:20-23.

F. But what IS the mission of the church of Christ? Flying in the face of contemporary denominational religions is that the Lord wants the work of the local church to be limited and focused on just three things. The apostle Paul set out to inform the congregations of God's people what the mission or

work of the Lord's church was to be.

The Mission of the Church is:

Preach the Gospel – Ephesians 3:10-12

Perfecting the Saints – Ephesians 4:11-16; Hebrews 10

Caring for the Needy – 2 Corinthians 8:4

G. How Long Do We Continue This? This might be the simplest of all of these points: Jesus said, "...occupy till I come" (Luke 19:13)! Christians have been doing this since the church was established in Acts 2. Christ will return someday in the same manner as He departed – Acts 1:9-11, "Now when He had spoken these things, while they watched, He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight. 10 And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven as He went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel, 11 who also said, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, who was taken up from you into heaven, will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven." ~



Three Publicans

Before we discuss the three publicans, we need to remember how the publicans were viewed by the rest of the Jews. Publicans collected taxes from their fellow countrymen for the Romans who had conquered Israel. It was a lucrative position and they often extracted exorbitant amounts from the people. They were hated by many.

When Jesus left the man He had healed of palsy, He saw Levi (Matthew) at the receipt of customs. Jesus said, "Follow me," and Matthew left all and followed Jesus (Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:13-17, Luke 5:27-32).

Levi did not wait to see that everything was perfectly in order in his own business before he followed Jesus, but left all immediately. He probably was a wealthy man, as most tax collectors were, but left all and went with Jesus. In contrast, we may hesitate to follow Jesus because we want to keep all that we have (Luke 18:23). We may give a great deal of thought to our own possessions, income and many material things which will ultimately be of no value. Also, we may consider our family and friends, which may be of great value, but which we must be willing to leave, if necessary, in order to follow Christ. Only after we have properly counted the cost should we follow Jesus, but we should always be aware that the

cost of not following will be greater than the cost of following, no matter what we must leave.

Matthew was classed with sinners, as all publicans were. When the scribes and Pharisees saw Jesus eating with Matthew and his guests, they asked, "How is it that He eateth and drinketh with publicans and sinners?" (Matthew 9:11). Jesus answered, "They that are whole have no need of a physician, but they that are sick."

The scribes and Pharisees were sinful, but in their self-righteousness did not know it. They were looking for the mote in the eyes of others while ignoring the beam in their own eyes (Mark 7:5). We need to always be aware that we are sinners and that we have faults and failures in our lives. Our lives are never completely perfect. However, we need to be able to help others who need God in their lives.

Jesus saw something special in Matthew, even though he was a publican, that could be used in carrying the gospel to sinners. Often we can help others, who seem to us as lacking any redeeming values, to be servants of our Heavenly Father.

In the story of the prayers of the Pharisee and the publican in Luke 18:9-14 we find several lessons. The Pharisee started his prayer

with negative reasons for being proud of himself, calling God's attention to the things he did not do. He said he was not an extortioner, unjust, adulterer, or as this publican. Perhaps he was none of these, but he was guilty of as great a sin, that of hypocrisy (Matthew 6:5).

Instead of looking into his own heart for pride, arrogance and intolerance, he looked at what he saw in others. Also, instead of measuring himself by what he did, he measured himself by what he did not do.

In contrast, the publican in his prayer judged no other person, but showed his humility, reverence and awe in the presence of God. So often, Christians are intolerant and critical of others when they should look inward in order to see their own weakness and sin. So often, we are proud of the things that we consider bad that we do not do, instead of rejoicing in the good we can do.

When we find someone we can help to be closer to God, instead of being critical of the person, ask God for wisdom in finding the best way to help. After you pray, go to the person and do what you can, where you are, with what you have to help him.

Another publican was one who touched Jesus' life and was