

How Jesus Fulfilled His Life's Mission

By Steve Pruitt

Early in Jesus' ministry he established who had sent him to earth and the purpose of his mission. The setting was a Sabbath day in a synagogue in Nazareth, the home town of Jesus. He was handed the book of the prophet Isaiah and read the following passage:

The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor, he has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord.

Luke 4:18-19

When Jesus finished reading the passage he closed the book, gave it to the attendant and sat down. Everyone in the synagogue looked intently at him. Jesus spoke again to the crowd and said, *Today this scripture is fulfilled in your hearing.* As he continued speaking the people in the synagogue were filled with wrath. They threw Jesus out of the city and took him to the brow of a hill. They would have thrown him off, but Jesus passed through the crowd unharmed.

Jesus performed the Father's will

Jesus had a specific mission. How did he carry out this mission? What were his motives for ministry? Let me suggest four avenues Jesus took to fulfill his mission on earth. The first avenue Jesus took was to perform the Father's will.

Jesus made it very clear that he didn't come to earth to do his own will. He did not have his own agenda but was given orders by someone greater than himself. Because of the love relationship between Jesus, the Son, and God, the Father, Jesus was compelled to carry out every instruction given to him by the Father. Everything the Father gave Jesus to do he performed with perfection. In John 5:30 Jesus is quoted as saying, *I can of myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and my judgment is righteous, because I do not seek my own will but the will of the Father who sent me.* In John 6:38 Jesus says, *For I have come down from heaven, not to do my own will, but the will of him who sent me.*

To say that Jesus had no will of his own would discard the fact that he was indeed human. The writer of Hebrews states that Jesus was in all points tempted like us except he did not sin (Hebrews 4:15). The drive to fulfill God's purposes was the overriding factor in overcoming temptation.

John shares an interesting story in chapter four of his gospel. We pick it up in verse three with Jesus leaving Judea to journey toward Galilee. In verse four John writes, *But he needed to go through Samaria.* Going through Samaria was not the common route for Jews traveling to Galilee. Jews considered Samaritans half breeds and would travel around Samaria to avoid coming in contact with them.

When Jesus' traveling party reached Sychar the disciples went into town to buy food. Jesus waited outside the city at Jacob's well. When a Samaritan woman came to draw water he asked her for a drink. In doing so Jesus broke two other Jewish traditions. Not only did Jews not speak with Samaritans, by custom it was unusual for a Jewish teacher to converse with a woman in public. That is the reason his disciples marveled that he spoke with a woman.

When urged by his disciples to eat, Jesus responded, *I have food to eat of which you do not know. My food is to do the will of him who sent me, and to finish his work.* At times his human desire to eat was quenched by his desire to carry out the Father's will.

The result of Jesus' conversation with the woman was that many people believed on him for salvation. This is why the Father needed Jesus to go through Samaria. He went against the tradition of man to fulfill his Father's plan. Many times doing the Father's will caused trouble with the religious leaders, but Jesus' drive to do the Father's will was more important to him than pleasing man.

Jesus proclaimed the Father's words

The second avenue Jesus used to fulfill his mission was that he proclaimed the Father's words.

Sir Winston Churchill was once quoted as saying, "A fanatic is one who can't change his mind and won't change the subject." Though we might shy away from referring to Jesus as a fanatic, many people in his day, including church leaders, were quick to pin that title on him. In fact the religious leaders were so enraged at times with the words Jesus spoke they sought to kill him before God was ready for him to die.

One such occasion occurred during the Feast of Dedication in Jerusalem. As Jesus went into the temple the Jews asked him to tell them plainly if he was the Christ. Jesus ended his answer by stating the he and the father were one. The Jews took up stones to stone him at which Jesus question the reason for their action. Their reply was, *For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God.* (John 10:33) At the end of Jesus' response John notes again, *Therefore they sought again to seize Him, but He escaped out of their hand.* (John 10:39)

Jesus left no doubt as to whom was putting words in his mouth; *For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak , just as the Father has told Me, so I speak .* (John 12:49-50)

On many other occasions Jesus reiterated the fact that his words were not his own.

Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works.

John 14:10

...but as the Father taught Me, I speak these things.

John 8:28

I speak what I have seen with My Father...

John 8:38

In his priestly prayer, Jesus said to the Father, *I have given them **Your word**; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.* (John 17:14)

Jesus perpetuated the Father's work

Another avenue Jesus used to fulfill his mission was that he perpetuated the Father's work.

God the Father has always been working. When God came in the form of the Son he merely continued the work he had already begun. Jesus emphasized this point when he said, *My Father has been working until now, and I have been working .* (John 5:17)

Jesus was single minded when it came to fulfilling his purpose on earth. He displayed this early in life when he was left behind by his parents after attending the

Feast of the Passover in Jerusalem. Mary and Joseph had traveled one day's journey before they realized that Jesus was not in the traveling party. When they finally found him, he was in the temple astonishing the teachers with his wisdom and understanding. When asked why he had not accompanied them he responded, *Did you not know that I must be about my Father's business?* (Luke 2:41-50)

Jesus came to do the work of the Father. He is quoted in John 9:4 as saying, *I must work the works of him who sent me while it is day; the night is coming when no one can work.* Matthew 4:23-24 tells us the work to which Jesus is referring. *Now Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people. Then his fame went throughout all Syria; and they brought to him all sick people who were afflicted with various diseases and torments, and those who were demon-possessed, epileptics, and paralytics; and he healed them.*

The ministry of Jesus encompassed all the work given him by the Father. The following scripture passages give us detailed descriptions of the work Jesus was to accomplish during his stay on earth.

... for the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost.

Luke 19:10

...just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life a ransom for many.

Matthew 20:28

...For this purpose the Son of God was manifested, that he might destroy the works of the devil.

1 John 3:8

As the time drew near for his betrayal and subsequent crucifixion, Jesus prayed to the Father, *I have glorified you on the earth. I have finished the work you have given me to do.*

Jesus personified the Father's ways

The final avenue used by Jesus to fulfill his mission was that he personified the Father's ways.

The Apostle Paul describes Jesus as *the image of the invisible God* (Colossians 1:15) and *who (Jesus) is the image of God* (2 Corinthians 4:4). The writer of Hebrews concurs stating that Jesus is *the express image of his (God's) person* (Hebrews 1:3).

Jesus' motive for the works he performed was not selfish ambition or self gain. He was simply showing the world the character of the Father. Jesus is the perfect picture of the Father. Everything he did while on earth gave insight to what God is like. When we look at Jesus we see the Father; like Father, like Son. Jesus personified the image of the Father.

The following scriptures best describe the character of God through the ministry of Jesus.

*And when Jesus went out he saw a great multitude; and he was moved with **compassion** for them, and healed their sick.*

Matthew 14:14

*So Jesus had **compassion** and touched their eyes. Immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*

Matthew 20:34

*Then a leper came to him, imploring him, kneeling down to him and saying, If you are willing, you can make me clean. Jesus, moved with **compassion**, put out his hand and touched him, and said to him, I am willing, be cleansed.*

Mark 1:40-41

*When the Lord saw her, he had **compassion** on her and said to her, Do not weep.*

Luke 7:13

God loves his creation. In John's epistle he states that God is love. The above verses leave us with no other conclusion than that Jesus healed from a heart of love. The Greek word for compassion in these verses means to have the bowels yearn, to feel sympathy or pity, or to be moved with compassion. You might say that God's "gut wrenching" love for mankind was manifested through his Son and moved him to intervene in their situation. It was this kind of love that took Jesus all the way to the cross where he paid the ultimate sacrifice for man.

The goal of Jesus' ministry is stated in Matthew 20:34, ... *and they followed him.* Jesus was not interested in mere manifestations of power. He desired for the people to believe that the Father had sent him, and he wanted to point them to the Father. The purpose of Jesus ministry today is not to exalt miracles, but to point people to the Maker. Why? ...that people will follow him.

In conclusion: God has called his church to live a life of ministry. With Jesus as our example, we are to continue the ministry of the kingdom of God which he demonstrated during his time on earth. He gave us this mandate with the words of the Father.

Most assuredly I say to you, he who believes in me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works that these he will do because I go to the Father.

John 14:12

And He said to them, Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.

Mark 16:15-18

Hebrews 13:8 states, *Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today and forever.* That being established, his will, words, works and ways have not changed since the beginning. Jesus came to earth to give us a picture of what God the Father is like. Scripture teaches he was God in the flesh (John 1:14). Since God has not changed, he ministers today the same way he ministered through his Son almost 2000 years ago. He invites his church to join him.