

Acts 26:9, 13-18 11/17/24 (Red Letters #10) **LETTERS OF MISSION**

I feel this way to a certain extent with all the Red Letters, but with these especially..., that if we had time, I'd like to look at all of the Red Letters that fall into the Letters of Mission. For instance, one of them that I did leave out and now I guess I didn't, is from Matthew 9

Slide: “36 When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd. 37 Then he said to his disciples, “The harvest is plentiful but the workers are few. 38 Ask the Lord of the harvest, therefore, to send out workers into his harvest field.”” (Matthew 9:36–38 NIV)

I guess it's not technically a Red Letter, but Matthew gives us a huge insight here as to what the point of the Mission of Jesus Christ really is. When Jesus talks to us about mission, that's not coming from some objective platitude, it's not just a dream or an idea. He absolutely loves every person on the face of this earth. And it's from that place of love and compassion that He wants us to make disciples, that He wants us to go into His harvest field. So, when He saw the crowds “He had compassion on them.” Do we? Think about it: When you see the crowds, the masses of people, many of whom are currently rejecting God and going their own way and doing their own thing, are you:

Slide:

<u>Are you</u> Irritated? Judgmental? Disgusted?	<u>Or</u> Compassionate? Patient? Kind?
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Folks, I don't know about you, but I cannot always say that I have looked at the harvest field in the same way that our Savior does. Nor have I always been willing to shine like He wants me to shine in this world. That is of course the next reading:

Slide: 14 “You are the light of the world. A city on a hill cannot be hidden. 15 Neither do people light a lamp and put it under a bowl. Instead they put it on its stand, and it gives light to everyone in the house. 16 In the same way, let your light shine before men, that they may see your good deeds and praise your Father in heaven.” (Matthew 5:13–16 NIV)

You know, it's one thing to think of **Jesus** as the Light of the world, but it's another to think of **yourself** as the Light of the world, isn't it? That involves a risk, doesn't it? If you set yourself up on a stand, shining for Jesus, then when you fall, you get judged, right? And nobody likes to be in that position. But you know what folks? Nobody likes to be in the dark either, and the fact is that's where most of the world is today. And in many cases they are waiting for **your** light to shine, before they can see the light of Christ.

I like the story of a family was out vacationing at the lake one summer. Dad had been putting out by the boat house. Two of his sons, a 12-year old and a 3-year old were down playing along the dock. The 12 year old was supposed to be watching his little brother, but he got distracted. The 3 year old, little Billy, thought that it would be a good time to check out the shiny aluminum fishing boat tied up at the end of the dock. So he went to the dock and put one foot on the boat, and one foot on the dock. He lost his balance and fell into the water.

The splash alerted the 12-yr old who let out a piercing scream. Dad came running from the boat house, jumped into the water, swam down, but unable to see anything, came up for air. Sick with panic, he went right back down into this murky water, and began to feel everywhere around the bottom. He couldn't feel anything. Finally, on his way up, he felt little Billy's arms

locked in a death grip on one of the posts of the dock, about 4 ft under the water. Prying the boy's fingers loose, they burst up together thru the surface to fill their lungs with life giving air.

Finally when the adrenaline had stopped surging, and nerves had calmed down a little bit, the Father asked his son, "What on earth were you doing down there hanging onto the post so far under the water? And little Billy's answer was a classic, laced with the wisdom only a toddler could give. He said, "I was just waiting for you dad. Just waiting for you."

Folks, in His compassion, our Lord Jesus, King of the universe left the glory and the splendor of heaven, a place where there was no pain and no sickness, no accidents, no hurt, and no death and no darkness... And he plunged into this dark, murky world on a rescue mission, a rescue mission for all of us who are drowning, a rescue mission for all of us who are barely hanging on, a rescue mission for all of us who are lost in the darkness. And He became our light.

Now, as we get further into the fall and closer to winter, we know we're starting to lose light, aren't we? And some of you notice this at a higher rate than others. You get SAD when the light goes away.

Slide: Seasonal Affective Disorder

Seasonal Affective Disorder, a type of depression that occurs for some in the winter months, sapping your energy and making you moody. You might need light therapy and vitamin D, a trip to Florida... and a steady diet of Red Letters from the Light of the world, Jesus Christ.

But there's a much bigger SAD than Seasonal Affective Disorder. It's a SAD that every human being has to face. I think I would call it Satanic Attack Disorder. Because Satan is real and he's out there and he doesn't want you to be happy. He wants you to be miserable. And one of the ways he goes about that is to convince you that you are a rotten person. That no one could love you, that you're not good enough, and that you've done too much wrong for God to ever really forgive you and make a place for you. Folks, do I need to remind you? The Devil is a liar. None of that is true – because **Jesus is the Light of the world**, He is the bright Morning Star – the Dayspring from on high – and He's all of those things for you - to pierce the darkness of your life and shatter it with his light and his love. And He wants us to do the same for others, to be reflectors of His light and love. To shine in the darkness of the lives of the people in our lives.

The next reading I have preached on perhaps more than any other text. You've heard it many times and it's part of our mission statement. We call it the Great Commission of Jesus. Jesus said:

Slide: **"19 ...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age."** (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV)

We know of course that some red letters or red signs mean stop

Slide: stop sign

Some mean no

Slide: no smoking

But on the other hand, some Red letters mean go

Slide: 70% off

Slide: Go Big Red!

And folks, the Red Letters of the Great Commission absolutely always mean "go."

Slide: “19 ...go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, 20 and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.” (Matthew 28:19–20 NIV)

We talked about discipleship last week and what that means, that disciples are students, but students who don't just learn from their master, but we go and implement what we've learned. So we are disciples who disciple others, **who make more and better disciples**. In other words, we cannot be content to stop learning and we cannot be content to stop **sharing** what we've learned.

It's like the guy who prayed this prayer every morning: "Lord, if you want me to witness to someone today, please give me a sign to show me who it is." One day he found himself on a bus when a big, burly man sat next to him. The bus was nearly empty but this guy sat right next to our praying friend.

The timid Christian anxiously waited for his stop so he could exit the bus. But before long, the big guy burst into tears and began to weep. He then cried out with a loud voice, "I need to be saved. I'm a lost sinner and I need the Lord. Won't somebody tell me how to be saved?" He turned to the Christian and pleaded, "Can you show me how to be saved?" The believer immediately bowed his head and prayed, "Lord, is this a sign?

Folks, if you're looking for a sign, Matthew 28 is it. Matthew 5 is it. And I like also this reading from Acts. Paul is actually giving the testimony of his conversion in court before King Agrippa. He was privileged to have the resurrected Jesus speak to him directly and to give him a mission to the gentiles. And listen closely to his mission because it's our mission.

Slide: “17 I am sending you to them 18 to open their eyes and turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to God, so that they may receive forgiveness of sins and a place among those who are sanctified by faith in me.”” (Acts 26:17–18 NIV)

Folks, people who don't know Jesus aren't just in some neutral ground, hanging out until you get around to sharing with them the love of Jesus. Their eyes are closed, they're in the dark and they are in the power of Satan. They may not know it, but you know it, and your Savior, who forgave your sins by dying for them on the cross, wants them to receive forgiveness and a place with Him and with you. And just as Paul was sent to the people of his day, we are sent to the people of ours. And each one of us has a part to play in “opening people’s eyes, and turning them from darkness to light, from the power of Satan to God.”

And you don't know when you'll have the opportunity to shine in some special way, so you need to be ready.

On the morning of 9/11, Jeannie Braca switched on the television to check the weather report, only to hear that a plane had just hit the World Trade Center. Jeannie's husband, Al, worked as a corporate bond trader for Cantor Fitzgerald. His office was on the 105th floor of Tower One.

Al had been in the World Trade Center when it was bombed in 1993 and had even helped a woman with asthma escape from the building. Jeannie knew that Al would do the same thing this time, “I knew he would stop to help and minister to people,” she said, “but I never thought for a minute that he wouldn't be coming home!”

A week later, like so many others who were in that building, Al's body was found in the rubble. Al's wife, Jeannie, and his son Christopher were devastated! Then the reports began to trickle in from friends and acquaintances. Some people on the 105th floor had made a last call or sent a final e-mail to loved ones saying that a man was leading people in prayer. A few

referred to Al by name. Al's family learned that he had indeed been ministering to people during the attack!

When Al realized that they were all trapped in the building and would not be able to escape, he shared the gospel with a group of 50 co-workers and led them in prayer. This news came as no surprise to Al's wife, Jeannie. For years, she and Al had been praying for the salvation of these men and women. According to Jeannie, Al hated his job and couldn't stand the environment. It was a world completely out of touch with his Christian values, but he wouldn't quit. Al was convinced that God wanted him to stay there, to be a light in the darkness, and he was right. Al was not ashamed of Jesus and His Red Letters. Often his co-workers had made fun of him and sarcastically had nicknamed him "The Rev", but in their moment of truth they all looked to him, and Al delivered.

Folks, I have a simple message this morning: May we be found ready and willing to do the same. Amen.