



Introduction to Acts 8

Sunday, October 23, 2016

Dr. Paul Borthwick

When asked about how we will know when Christ is going to return, Bible scholar George Ladd referred to Matthew 24:14 when he responded, “I do not know. God alone knows the definition of terms. I cannot precisely define who ‘all the nations’ are. Only God knows the exact meaning of ‘evangelize’ ... But I do not need to know. I know only one thing: Christ has not yet returned; therefore, the task is not yet done. When it is done, Christ will come. Our responsibility is not to insist on defining the terms of our task; our responsibility is to complete it. So long as Christ does not return, our work is undone. Let us get busy and complete our mission.”

This is a powerful statement on the role of the local church in completing the task of global missions—of discipling all the ethnic groups in the world by teaching them to worship the One, True God through Jesus Christ our Lord. This weekend we have had the opportunity to listen to many great things that are going on around the world as we have interacted with missionaries serving in so many different countries in so many different parts of the world. As small groups, let us be about the work of evangelizing even those in our little corner of the world. Ultimately, all missions are local missions. It is just a matter of where the locale is. So long as the Lord has placed us in the greater Lansing area, let us get busy and complete our mission.

Read and Reflect *(Use this section to write down any thoughts you had on the sermon. Make sure to note any questions you had about something in the passage or in the sermon.)*

Read Acts 8:1-8; 26-40

If we want to make a difference in this unfinished task, we must...

I. Be Dependent on God's Power

II. Be Obedient to God's Prompting

III. Rely on God's Preparation of People

Discuss

1. When you think of “global missions” what kinds of things come to your mind?
2. Dr. Borthwick mentioned that he believes comfort is the biggest hindrance to Americans sharing the gospel and going abroad to minister to people groups in difficult parts of the world. What, in your mind, is the greatest hindrance to global missions? What is the greatest hindrance to local missions—sharing Christ with those we interact with regularly who don’t know Him?
3. What similarities are there between the church in Jerusalem described in the book of Acts and our church in America today? What are the main differences?
4. Global missions is all about partnerships—working together to take the gospel to people who have never heard it before. How has God called you to participate in this work? What role do you play on the team?
5. The work of evangelism and discipleship is given to the whole church, not just pastors and missionaries. Each individual Christian needs to respond in obedience to Jesus’ teaching in the Great Commission (Matt. 28:18-20). Who is someone in your everyday life or sphere of influence who does not know Jesus? How can we pray for you to encourage you to share Christ with them? What obstacles do you perceive to be in the way?

Go Deeper... IN PRAYER

1. Pray for the missionaries of South Church.
 - a. For their own relationships with the Lord
 - b. For the spiritual health of their families and fellow workers and team members
 - c. For patient endurance as they plod consistently in the work of the gospel
 - d. For boldness to speak the gospel confidently and clearly
 - e. For God to open the hearts of those who hear that they might be saved

2. Pray for us as a church
 - a. For our rejection of comfort as an obstacle to gospel proclamation
 - b. For our dependence upon the Holy Spirit in our own ministry here in Lansing
 - c. For continued commitment to supporting missionaries who serve over seas
 - d. For one another as we commit to sharing Christ with those around us
 - e. For our community, that they would see the light of the gospel in our interactions with them and with one another

3. Pray for people (by name) in your sphere of influence who do not know Jesus
 - a. For the Spirit to go ahead of you to cause them to be aware of their need of a Savior
 - b. For the Spirit to clarify the gospel in your own mind and heart as you prepare to share with them
 - c. For boldness and confidence as you or other Christians in their lives tell them about the good news of Jesus' death, resurrection, and imminent return