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“Multiplying the Ministry”

II Timothy 2:1-19

Introduction

Jared Olivetti, Keith Magill, Barry York and I attended this week the Banner of Truth Minister's Conference. (Messiah College, Grantham, PA) There were about 23 RP pastors among the 200 attendees. It was a great conference. The theme was preaching Christ in all the Scriptures. Our own Ted Donnelly was one of the main speakers and clearly his messages were the highlight of the 3 days together. It occurred to me how well the things we were being taught fit into the scheme of the things we have been trying to emphasize this month in this Sharpening Our Vision series. As we have been considering who we are and why we exist as a church the foundation stone for all is the glory of God in Jesus Christ. We have affirmed our commitment to seek His glory through worship and devotion to Christ. And we are committed to the very topic of this conference – preaching Jesus Christ in all of the Bible. But we have also been trying to reaffirm that out of a passion for His glory must flow a zeal for ministry and mission. The glory of God is the starting point and it is that thing that feeds our desire for mission. We've tried to lead us into a deepening love for and commitment to the lost. And we have reaffirmed the vital role of the body of Christ in advancing and building up and bearing fruit for His kingdom. Our love for each other and our willingness to use our gifts to build up one another is crucial in a healthy growing church.

Now today at the end of the series, we want to consider the outcome of these things. If we are consumed with a passion for the glory of God, if we love people – both the lost, in terms of their need for Christ, and Christians, that they would become mature in Christ – then the church will multiply. Today we are going to consider this subject of a multiplying ministry.

[II Timothy 2:1-19]

Somebody asked me this week why we want to daughter another church. That's a fair question. Something that takes so much energy and time and effort and resources ought to be done for good reasons. I believe at the heart of the answer is the nature of the gospel and the kingdom. The church, which has been given the keys of the kingdom, is by nature an expanding, growing and multiplying organism. Jesus likened the kingdom to leaven which spreads through a whole lump of dough. He said it was like a little mustard seed that would grow and expand into a large tree. He promised to build His church. He said the His kingdom would come on earth as it is in heaven and cover the whole earth as the water covers the sea. The multiplying of the ministry through daughtering new congregations is one way to participate in that grand vision.

When we start a new congregation we do it in faith believing that the laborers will be multiplied. It will facilitate and require the training of new elders and deacons and teachers and Bible study leaders.

But not only will the laborers be multiplied, so will the influence. Have you ever planted myrtle in your garden? It's a wonderful ground cover. It spreads rapidly and is very hardy and it has a natural beauty to it. Besides that it really helps keep

the weeks out of your garden. If you place one plant of myrtle in the middle of your garden, it will, in time spread out over the whole of your garden. But if you want to increase your ability to cover the garden, you will plant one on this side of your garden and another on the other side – one at the top and one at the bottom. By doing that, you multiply your influence in the garden. That's one of the benefits that come from daughtering new works. You have a greater influence in spreading the gospel throughout the city or county or state if we have more than one place from which ministry flows.

Now a question we ought to ask ourselves is why we think such an undertaking would be successful. It's natural to have some concerns about sending out a significant number of people from our church family. Isn't that dangerous? Isn't it risky? We have a good thing going, why mess with a good thing? What I would like us to do today is consider why embarking on such a thing is a good idea and why such an idea, when undertaken carefully and in faith that God is leading us to it, will find success and blessing from God.

I. Jesus Christ has given us the Resources for a Multiplying Ministry.

Now when we talk about resources we are not talking about the resources of the world. The important resource for this kind of work is not financial (although we can be thankful the building is almost paid for). It's not a platform a power. We don't have to have well known preachers, and movers and shakers in the community for this to happen. In fact, the church has always tended to grow when it's worldly resources and positions of power are minimal and challenged. The church in the New Testament began in a hostile environment. Paul walked into cities where he wasn't known,

where he usually had no contacts and where there was no established base of power. And more often than not the church grew and multiplied in the midst of hostility and persecution.

So, the resources that Christ has given us for this task are not the physical resources of the world, but spiritual resources. There are two provisions God has made for the successful multiplying of the ministry.

1. The message of the gospel.

Lest we think that this is too simple and too obvious, look at the simple admonition of Paul in verse 8 – *Remember Jesus Christ*. If only we would remember Jesus Christ. Here is the great center of everything we do as a church. Paul tells us why we ought to remember Him. *He is risen from the dead*. The power of the resurrection is the power that is given to the church to take the gospel from within to without. The power of the resurrection is what awakens the souls of spiritually dead men and gives them life. It's that power that brings change.

And this Jesus Christ is the descendant of David. We are reminded that the redemption of the world, the multiplying of the kingdom comes about not because we will it but because God wills it. He has been about the gathering of His people since the fall of Adam. In David we clearly see the plan of God to rule the world and shepherd His people. The promises made to David were the promises made to redeem the world through Christ.

This thought was so great to Paul; it was so fixed and grafted into his soul that he called the gospel *his* gospel. He doesn't mean that in an arrogant sense. He means that his whole being and purpose for life was found in the gospel. And nothing would shake him free from it. Suffering could not shake him free; hardship at the hands of others

would not cause him to lose focus on the gospel; being misunderstood or persecuted or treated unjustly - not even imprisonment would discourage him from a gospel focus. Everything Paul did, he did in light of the gospel. Here's a personal test for you. How do you respond when you are treated poorly? Are you most concerned about your rights, or how the this circumstance might advance the gospel?

And this is our calling – as a church. And this is your calling as a Christian. No matter what your interests, gifts, passions or hobbies – everything you do should be done so that the sweetness of the gospel is seen in you and proclaimed through you. If your interest is the family – *remember Jesus Christ* and make the gospel central to what you do. If your interest is politics, *remember Jesus Christ* and make the good news of Christ clear and attractive and inviting to those around you. If it's music or education or your career or those in jail or on campus or in your neighborhood – *remember Jesus Christ*. Consider how your words and your actions reflect on Christ and the message of salvation. This is the great resource of a multiplying church. The gospel of Christ must have preeminence in everything we do.

2. People

II Timothy is Paul's last letter. It is written to the young pastor Timothy. He is passing the torch on to this one who has proven to be faithful. But even as Paul charges Timothy to take up the reins of the gospel, he knows that the future of the church doesn't belong to any one man. Timothy is not to labor alone. The multiplying of the kingdom will happen through the laboring of the people of God. And so he writes in II Timothy 2:2, "*The things which you have heard from me in the presence of many witnesses, entrust these to faithful men who will be able to*

teach others also. The ministry will multiply as others are trained and equipped to labor.

Jesus once said, the harvest is plentiful but the laborers are few. Have you ever wondered why the church lacks laborers? As Paul instructs Timothy to train others to labor, he gives him reasons that the task will not be easy.

1. It's costly. He uses the analogy of the soldier to remind Timothy that not everyone will be willing to pay the price. Soldiers suffer. Soldiers must give up many things if they are going to be a good soldier. (We see it right now through images of our soldiers in Iraq.) There are not many laborers in the church because not many will pay the price of suffering that is demanded of giving yourself to another.

2. It requires selflessness. The athlete has to deny himself many pleasures to train for the prize. There are not many top athletes who make a regular feast on potato chips and coke. His focus is singular – it is the goal of winning. In Christian service the goal is helping other people. The focus is outside of ourselves. That's why we've spent so much time talking about the great need to love people. Paul wrote about Timothy to the Philippians in Philippians 2:20, 21. He said, "*For I have no one else of kindred spirit who will genuinely be concerned for your welfare. For they all seek after their own interests, not those of Christ Jesus.*"

3. It's hard work. The farmer is simply described as *hard working*. He labors and toils and sweats with no applause, no audience, no attention. There are no fans that line the fields cheering on the farmer. But his labors bear fruit. In our culture of leisure and materialism, not many are willing to work hard – much less to do it without the praise of men

or the reward of earthly pleasures. *What will I get out of it* is not the cry or concern of a laborer.

4. It's burdensome. In verse 10 Paul says *I endure all things for the sake of those who are chosen*. He writes those words from prison. Giving yourself to people can bring great burdens. Ask anyone who has discipled or mentored a young Christian if their love for the person does not cause them to live every up and down in the life of that person. Laboring in the life of another is often an intensely personal thing. In II Corinthians 11 Paul wrote, *"I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure on me of concern for all the churches. Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?"* Anyone who has given themselves to another person can identify with those words.

5. It is a spiritual work that requires training. Look at II Timothy 2:15. *"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth."* Laborers have to be trained and equipped and prepared for their work. It takes diligent preparation. I'm not talking necessarily about seminary here or formal training. But any believer who wants to labor must first be a learner.

And so, one of the great resources for growth God has given the church is men and women who labor. But it is not an easy path. The opportunities abound, but those able and willing to work and suffer are far fewer. The challenge is clear. Are you willing to pay the price to labor? Committing to aggressively taking the gospel to your neighbor starts with a conviction that God is calling you to the task. It involves learning the skills to be effective. It

means paying a price. The same is true for getting involved in the jail ministry, or committing to discipling or mentoring a young Christian in our midst. Giving yourself to others is the path to a fruitful and multiplying life and it is an essential resource for a multiplying church.

So the first reason we can have confidence the church can and will multiply is that God has given us the resources to do it.

II. Jesus Christ has given the Promise to Multiply the Ministry.

In Matthew 16:18, Jesus said to His disciples, *I will build My Church and the gates of hell will not prevail against it.* This verse not only contains a marvelous promise that Jesus will build the church, it also gives us a graphic illustration. Let me ask you to do something I ask of everyone who takes the Newcomer's Class. Think of that verse and bring up in your mind an image of what Jesus is describing. Most people I ask to do this envision the church standing strong and victorious against the attacks of Satan. They view the church in a very defensive posture. But look at the verse again. *The gates of hell will not prevail against it.* Gates are a decidedly defensive mechanism in warfare. The gates described in the verse are the gates of hell, not the gates of the church. The image Jesus paints is of a church on the move. A church that is advancing. A church that is marching into the world. And hell will not be able to stand against such a church. The gospel of Jesus Christ is a gospel of power. It is a message that conquers the heart. It is taken by a people who have been changed by its very message and filled with the Spirit of God. This promise illustrates the Great Commission. *Go, therefore and*

make disciples of all the nations. This is our vision as a church. This is our calling. This is our purpose.

Our prayer is that God will burn into your heart a focus and love for the glory of Christ so that your greatest longing will be that the message of the gospel will go forth from your life, your family and this church.