

Text: John 17:18

Title: “Mission ADVENTure”

Open your Bibles to John 17. This season we’re focused on the Advent, and the ADVENTure continues here at Travis. Christmas Store was a tremendous touch in our community. Parents of seven hundred children were helped to provide gifts for their kids. Most importantly, 161 of the adults made professions of faith. Tonight the ADVENTure continues with the Nativity Symphony concert. It will be a great witness as we lift up Jesus. Then next Saturday and Sunday we need your help to put out door-hangers on 3000 homes in the neighborhoods to the north of our church inviting them to the Christmas Eve service. The details are in your worship folder. We also have these personal invitation cards for you to give out as you are in a restaurant or a store. Next week we’ll have door-hangers that you can take around your neighborhood.

Advent refers to the coming or the arrival of the God/Man Jesus Christ, born to save us from our sins. We see this in God’s Word in more places than just the accounts of Jesus’ birth. In fact, here in John 17, toward the end of His life Jesus poured out His heart in prayer to the Father. He prayed for His followers and He prayed for us. Can you just comprehend that? And as He prayed He reflected back on that moment in eternity when God sent Him into the world. **Read John 17:13-19.**

ILLUSTRATION – One of the most popular candies at Christmas is M&Ms. The first M in M&Ms stands for a man named Forrest Mars. Mars grew up in a candy-making family; his father invented the Snickers bar. In the early 1900s, Forrest Mars worked his way through Europe learning about the candy business. He ended up in Spain during the Spanish Civil War and noticed the soldiers were given little chocolate pellets coated with a hard candy shell that kept them from melting. Mars returned to the U.S. in 1940 and he partnered with a guy named Bruce Murray to make this new candy inspired by what he saw in Spain ... chocolate pellets with a hard candy shell. Murray is the second M in M&Ms. The partners Mars and Murrie branded their new candy with their initials, and they struck a deal to have M&M’s placed in the rations of servicemen as they went around the world in WWII. And they’re popular to this day.

I’ve told you this story not so that when you see or eat an M&M this Christmas season you will think Mr. Mars and Mr. Murrie. When you see the letters M&M I want you to think about two missions ... Jesus’ mission and our mission. The purpose for which Jesus was born in Bethlehem’s manger signals to us our purpose for living as followers of Jesus. Look again at...

John 17:18 - As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

In that short sentence Jesus gives us ...

1. HIS MISSION

“You sent me into the world...” (John 17:18a)

ORIGINATION – “You sent me...”

Christ understood the origination of His mission ... how it was that He was in a human body on the earth. The word “sent” literally means to be sent on a mission. He was sent by the Father on the mission to save people from their sins.

ILLUSTRATION – My wife collects nativity sets. She has them from all over the world. Some of them are huge, and some are very small. There are placed all over our house. We even have a lighted nativity scene in our front yard. Every time you see a nativity scene or read the story of the birth of Christ in the Gospels ... of Joseph being told about Mary’s having conceived a child by the Holy Spirit ... of Mary being told by the angel of her assignment to give birth to the Savior... of the journey to Bethlehem ... of the birth of Jesus in a barn ... you are witnessing the arrival, the advent, of the Son of God who was sent on a mission. You are looking through a window to see where it all started in eternity ... with the broken heart of God to rescue a lost world, to redeem lost humanity.

DESTINATION – “into the world...”

Christ also understood the destination of His mission. He was sent *into the world*. From eternity God looked into this sphere of time and space and saw our need. Jesus stepped out of the glory He had in the eternal heaven and stepped into the gory mess of our sinful world.

ILLUSTRATION – A few years ago I was running along the Trinity Trail. I could hear the sound of large truck driving up behind me and as it passed me I noticed that it was a tanker truck. It drove on ahead of me a good ways and stopped. By the time I caught up with them the crew had gotten out of the truck and one of them was putting on a special suit. The others had pulled the lid off of the sewer and immediately I could smell it. I knew that they were getting ready to lower this guy down into that smelly hole to do some sort of repair. What a job!

And that’s what happened in the Incarnation. God suited up in a human body and was sent down into this world to live among some smelly sinners in order to save them.

Now, when Jesus talks about the “world” He is describing *people*, not the *planet*. He is talking about people associated with a world system that is set against and separated from God. It is into this sin-infected world of lost humanity that the Father sent the Son to save.

So there was an origination of the mission that led to a destination of the mission, but it involves sanctification for the mission.

SANCTIFICATION – “For them I sanctify myself...” (v.19a)

“Sanctified” means to be set apart for obedience and service to the Father. Jesus sanctified or devoted Himself entirely to fulfilling the mission the Father gave to Him. His desire was for the Father to be glorified, and He would lay down His life for that to happen. It would mean His suffering and dying on the Cross for our sins. Every fiber of His being was devoted to obedience and service to the Father.

That was His mission and there is also...

2. OUR MISSION

John 17:18 - As you sent me into the world, I have sent them into the world.

As followers of Jesus you and I cannot separate our mission in life from Jesus' mission in life. His mission is our mission. Remember the M&M go together. Unfortunately we don't always want to go that way.

ILLUSTRATION – The other day I was in a store pushing a shopping cart, but it didn't want to roll very easily. I looked down and noticed that one wheel was stuck pointing in the wrong direction. It's really hard for the cart to roll smoothly when one of the wheels is cut in the wrong direction. Does Jesus have to fight that with us?

So as it was for Jesus it is for us. There is an origination to our mission.

ORIGINATION – “I have sent them...” (v.18b)

Our marching orders, like those of the disciples, came directly from Jesus. The Father sent the Son and the Son sends us. After His crucifixion and resurrection Jesus would say this again to His disciples:

John 20:21 - Again Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.”

So there is an origination to our mission and there is a destination for our mission.

DESTINATION – “Into the world...” (v.18b)

Remember when Jesus talks about the “world” He is describing people, not the planet. He is talking about people associated with a world system and who are separated from God. Jesus in His great prayer prays to the Father about our relationship with the world. Just look up a few verses in John 17. We were given to Jesus out of the world.

John 17:6 - “I have revealed you to those whom you gave me out of the world. They were yours; you gave them to me and they have obeyed your word.

So we live in this world, but our allegiance is no longer to this world. However, our mission is lived out in this world.

John 17:11 - I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to you. Holy Father, protect them by the power of your name...

The reason we need protection in the world is that we are so different that just as the world hated Jesus, the world will hate us.

John 17:14 - I have given them your word and the world has hated them, for they are not of the world any more than I am of the world.

The reason that we are hated is because we are no more part of the world than Jesus was. That is, we no longer belong to this world system that is opposed to God and His ways. But it is into this world that we are sent, just as Jesus was sent, and we need protection. That's why Jesus prayed...

John 17:15 - My prayer is not that you take them out of the world but that you protect them from the evil one.

Satan wants to destroy our witness. Jesus doesn't want to take us physically out of the world but He does want to protect us from Satan. So there is an origination to our mission that leads to a destination of our mission that calls for sanctification for our mission.

SANCTIFICATION – “That they too may be truly sanctified...” (v.19b)

Again, “sanctified” means to be set apart for obedience and service to the Father. Jesus was sent; we are sent. Jesus sanctified Himself so that we may be sanctified. Now the sanctification of Jesus is different from our sanctification. Sanctified is associated with the word “holy.” If I could coin a word I would say that sanctified means to be “holy-fied.” For Jesus, that was always His nature. He was holy God. But our sanctification is different. Something has to be done for us, as sinful human beings, to make us fit to be used by God. That's what Jesus meant when He said that He sanctified Himself so that we too may be truly sanctified ... useful to a holy God. Do you see it? Jesus died to make you useful to God!

Now let me close by giving you three ways to be on mission this season:

DARE to get out of your comfort zone.

Just think about what a change it was for Jesus to leave the glory of heaven in the presence of the Father to come to this earth. He laid aside His privilege, His place, His power to take on a human body. What would it mean for you to alter your life to fulfill God's mission for you? How would you change the traffic pattern of your life? What difference would it make in your vocational plans? How differently will you spend your vacation time or your leisure time? How differently will you spend your money as you think about Jesus' mission and your mission to get the Good News to the world?

CARE about the spiritual condition of the people you encounter.

This all starts in the loving heart of God who has sent us to live among those who don't know Jesus yet. There are people at home, at your work or school and where you spend your free time. Do you care about their spiritual condition? Do you know about their spiritual condition? Are they saved or lost?

But that's not all. We need to care about the whole world of lost people. Jesus said that we would be His witnesses to the ends of the earth. As individual believers we have to care about people in other

parts of the world, like those who belong to the Indian people group Rama Shatriya. Are we praying for them? Are we giving so they can hear? Are we going?

So we dare, we care and...

SHARE the good news that Jesus came to transform lives.

When Jesus entered our world He entered with words. In Jesus' prayer in John 17:14 He said, "Father, I have given them your word..." Our mission involves daring, caring and sharing the Good News of Jesus Christ. When is the last time you spoke with someone about their relationship with Jesus Christ? Are you able to explain how a person can be right with God? How frequently do you tell your story?

This Christmas many of us will travel to be with family, or we'll be in a circle of people at a party. In Luke 8 we're told about Jesus encountering a demon-possessed man. This man's life was a twisted mess. He was so out-of-control that he had to be chained and kept under guard. Well, Jesus confronted the man and the demons in his life ... and miraculously the man was delivered. People could hardly recognize him after the change Jesus made. But then Jesus told the man to do something ...

Luke 8:39 - "Return home and tell how much God has done for you." So the man went away and told all over town how much Jesus had done for him.

The reason your heart is still beating, the reason that God has not taken you out of this world is that He has a mission for you and it is to dare and care and share the Good News about God's love. That's the reason you are still alive.