

## MISSIO DEI – WHAT /S THIS THING?

As it snows outside I'm contemplating Luke's account of Jesus's birth that will soon be read at Christmas Eve services. It's intriguing to consider the angelic announcement of "good news of great joy that will be for all people" (Luke 2:10) to the shepherds, the shepherds' unhesitating reaction to go to Bethlehem and see "this thing" (v. 15), with the immediate result that they made known the statement of the angels to others.

Even today as people listen to and encounter the truth of God's Word and will, the Holy Spirit mightily works, allowing them to see and believe "this thing" – God's goodness, His grace, mercy, and love – so that they experience his transformative power. Then, they too — almost immediately and inevitably — desire to make known the "good news of great joy."

What is this good news? That there is salvation, deliverance from missing the mark, deliverance from guilt and brokenness, and even death. Knowing and experiencing God and *deliberately sharing* the good news of a great joy — the very mission of God (*Missio Dei*) — go hand in hand. This coupling of salvation and deliverance occurred continually in the ministry of Jesus, as related in the Gospels. The healing of the demoniac and the Samaritan women at the well are two examples.

The salvation-deliverance pattern repeats itself—in almost uninterrupted fashion—in the Book of Acts. In Michael Green's *Evangelism in the Early Church*, the reader is taken through the Book of Acts and beyond to see how the Church – God's people – in the first 200 years after Pentecost lived as the salt of the earth and the light of the world and *prioritized* the sharing of the

Gospel (“*the word of the Lord continues to grow*”) in a hostile world. “Christians” recognized themselves as “nobodies” and yet simultaneously as “missionaries.” “... neither the strategy nor the tactics of the first Christians were particularly remarkable,” Green writes. “What was remarkable was their **conviction**, their **passion** and their **determination** to act as Christ's embassy to a rebel world, whatever the consequences.”

These Christians embraced the fact that God’s mission had a Church, not that the Church had a mission. Indeed, their ecclesiology, but especially their missiology, changed the world.

I pray that as Christ’s embassy to a hostile world today we boldly do the same under the grace of God and in His strength!

The essays you will find in this volume are invitations for you to “rest,” to be renewed in a relationship with God, and to be recentered and reacquainted with the *Missio Dei* – the Mission of God. This is the *Missio Dei*: a lively, purposeful recognition of God’s sending and our going to the world.

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