

MISSION COMMISSIONING SERVICE
Message Manuscript
Billy Sanderson: 5/8/2011

Known as the “Prince of Preachers,” the great British Baptist minister Charles Spurgeon said, “If God has called you to be a missionary, don’t stoop to be a king.” Today we are here to recognize the group of almost 200 students and adults from our very own Student Ministries who are heeding this call this summer. They are heeding the call to bring broken and hurting people to The King, Jesus Christ who Himself left His heavenly position of royalty to bind up the brokenhearted and to set the captive free.

On May 30, 1792 William Carey considered, “The Father of Modern Missions” preached a sermon out of Isaiah on reaching the lost to a small Baptist church. In a private conference with his closest friends immediately following the service, Carey laid himself on the missionary altar saying, “I will go down if you will hold the ropes. I’ll go into the caves, I’ll go into the places where you will never go, but you must hold the ropes. I’ll go down if you’ll hold on. I’ll go if you are here holding fast, holding tight.” There the ‘Baptist Society For Propagating The Gospel Among The Heathen’ was formed. The mission was to be supported by personal & individual contributions. Those who would “hold the ropes.”

This organization was later known as the Baptist Missionary Society and today known as Baptist Mission Society World Mission. As a leading

Christian mission organization, BMS World Mission aims to share life in all its fullness with the world's peoples by:

- **enabling them to know Christ**
- **alleviating suffering and injustice**
- **improving the quality of life**

With people as the primary agent of change - motivating, training, sending and resourcing them.

Today we recognize students and adults who have heard from God and are answering His call to go “into the caves” and we simply ask of you to “hold the ropes.”

Today we pause to ask, “Why “go into the caves?” Why do the students we are commissioning today feel the call of God to go? Yet, it is simple: God has called them to go. Our King is asking this morning of us to go. Some go by giving and others give by going. This morning God has called us to go and He is calling some of you to join together with us in prayer and financial support to “hold the ropes” as we embrace His call.

We are being sent out this summer to find those who are broken and introduce them to the One who can heal them of their despair and brokenness. One of my all time favorite passages of scripture that clearly illustrates this is found in 2 Samuel chapters 4-9. May this amazing story captivate your heart and spur you to think about how you can help by

giving as you witness a King calling someone who is broken and can't possibly come on his own.

King David had a deep friendship with Jonathan, the son of King Saul. Their friendship went beyond just fishing buddies...they were the closest of friends. In a battle for the ages, of which Hollywood could not reproduce, Jonathan and his brothers Abinidab and Malki-Shua were all killed in an epic battle against the Philistines. **1 Samuel 31:1-6, " ¹ Now the Philistines fought against Israel; the Israelites fled before them, and many fell dead on Mount Gilboa. ² The Philistines were in hot pursuit of Saul and his sons, and they killed his sons Jonathan, Abinadab and Malki-Shua. ³ The fighting grew fierce around Saul, and when the archers overtook him, they wounded him critically.**

⁴ Saul said to his armor-bearer, "Draw your sword and run me through, or these uncircumcised fellows will come and run me through and abuse me."

But his armor-bearer was terrified and would not do it; so Saul took his own sword and fell on it. ⁵ When the armor-bearer saw that Saul was dead, he too fell on his sword and died with him. ⁶ So Saul and his three sons and his armor-bearer and all his men died together that same day.

As the Biblical story unfolds in II Samuel 4, news of this great tragedy reached the palace in Jerusalem where Jonathan's 5 year-old son Mephibosheth was staying.

At this point Mephibosheth is now the only living royal blood-line to the throne. So the number one concern was to get this young child to safety, protecting the royal lineage. Unfortunately in the process scripture tells us in **2 Samuel 4:4**, **“his nurse picked him up and fled, but as she hurried to leave, he fell and became crippled.”** How would you feel if your sole responsibility was the care of a 5 year-old boy, who by the way is now the only heir to the throne...and in your care he falls, becoming crippled. When I was in the military, one of the most basic elements of war that you are taught is that once you have the enemy retreating, take out their headquarters-- their main source of communication...get to their leaders. Knowing this, their number one concern was to get Mephibosheth to safety as the Philistines would be coming to take control of the palace, their headquarters and place of communication.

In our lifetime, under our responsibility and care, people have fallen and become broken and wounded, it is time we go and get them back to the safety of being in the presence of the King.

It was three months ago when I was holding my own son with the thought of get him to safety. On that cold night in February as I was rocking our then 19 month old son to sleep I smelled smoke. Placing him back in his crib I went downstairs to discover that our entire living room was engulfed in flames.

The roar of the flames was incomprehensible and the air was taken right out of me. As I felt the burning in my lungs and throat I began screaming for my son Levi as I ran back up the stairs to his bedroom. As I grabbed Levi I can't tell you the myriad of thoughts that raced through my mind in those life-altering moments, but the main one was what any parent would do...save my son.

I ran with Levi back down the stairs only this time to be greeted by a wall of flames and billowing smoke that had now consumed our entire downstairs. The speed by which the fire was moving was profound. There were only two choices at this point, go back upstairs and jump out a window with a 19 month old, or go through the flames. So I grabbed Levi as tight as I could, wrapping him in his blanket, and through the flames we went. I made it to our front door and to our driveway where I got into my truck. I pulled away from the house when seconds later it exploded.

I did not have the thought of Philistine soldiers coming after us, I didn't have the weight of Levi being the only heir to a royal family...but he is my son and the reality of that produced courage in the face of fear. Simply put...this is what missions really is...the courage to walk through the fire to get others to the safety of the King. Boldly stepping out when the path is not certain. No matter the circumstance knowing that getting the broken and wounded to the safety in Jesus Christ is our utmost concern.

Isaiah 43:2 says, "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."

David is now the King and he asks if there are still any relatives of Jonathan so that he may “show kindness.” Enter the servant of David, Ziba. Ziba answers King David, **2 Samuel 9:3-4 “There is still a son of Jonathan; he is crippled in both feet. He is at the house of Makir son of Ammiel in Lo Debar.”** Remember the original question “why go into the caves”? Here is the answer. Mephibosheth was broken in life...he should have been the King; he grew up in the palace in Jerusalem. Yet we find him now years later in Lo Debar, which its name means, “a place of no communication.” Broken...a place where you feel like no one understands, hurt, despair, lonely, shame. Why are our student missionaries going this summer?

The world is full of Mephibosheth’s...broken people. Yet the King is calling their name. Notice how Ziba is sent as the “missionary” to go and bring Mephibosheth back to the King. And notice how Mephibosheth was still crippled in both feet, so he couldn’t come on his own.

The world is full of broken people in need of being brought back to the King’s table. In the passage it shows the heart of Mephibosheth when he was brought into the King’s presence. Now you could imagine his fear! He doesn’t know what the plans are of the King. Surely he thought that the King could have summoned him to kill him and his family because they were the only remaining royal blood line of King Saul.

Verse 7&8 tell us that King David's first words to him were, **"Don't be afraid."** Mephibosheth response, he **"bowed down and said, 'What is your servant, that you should notice a dead dog like me?'"** True humility!

Whether you are called to be a missionary or you invest in others who are, one thing is certain: we are all called to bring broken people into the presence of the King!

Notice if you will how after Mephibosheth was brought back to the King; verse 13 says that Mephibosheth, **"lived in Jerusalem, because he always ate at the King's table, and he was crippled in both feet."** His condition was not fixed, yet he dined with the King. I encourage you today that often times we think that our mission endeavors are to clean people up and fix their brokenness before we bring them to church or introduce them to Christ our risen King.

Here we have a humble servant who sits at the King's table surely surrounded at times by valiant men like Joab the commander of David's armies or possibly Benaiah the royal body guard. One great thing about sitting at the King's table when you're crippled in both feet...broken...dropped; no one sees what is under the table.

In the three months since I ran through the flames with my son I can tell you that I've been broken. I've felt lost and lonely at times. I've felt like no-one understands. I've had night tremors of waking up trembling at the thought of losing my only son. My wife and I have grieved as we lost

everything that we owned. Yet through it all God has sent Ziba's into our lives. I can't begin to tell you how overwhelming of a journey this has been for us, but I can tell you that the staff and compassionate people of Autumn Ridge Church have brought us back to the King's presence.

For 16 years now I've been a youth pastor. I can't tell you how many youth I've brought to the King-- broken and hurting like Mephibosheth-- only to see them now "going into caves" themselves and not "stooping to be kings." And these past 3 months I've been "MephiboBilly!" I've had to allow others to help me and my family. I've simply been broken before the Lord saying, "Who am I that you would protect me and my son?" "Who am I that you would notice a dead dog like me?" This experience has given me increased trust in the Lord, as He promised in **Isaiah 43:2, "When you walk through the fire, you will not be burned; the flames will not set you ablaze."**

It allows me to help others who are hurting and dealing with great loss. I am humbled every time I brag on the unbelievable support of the staff here and the Autumn Ridge Church family that sits before me here today. I wish there were enough words to express the gratitude of my family for you being Ziba and carrying us back to the King's presence. We have been broken, yet there have been those who have said to us, "we will go down into the caves for you!"

Your position at the King's table will overcome your condition! A famous artist once was asked to paint a picture of a dying church. It was expected that he would paint a small and humble congregation in a dilapidated building. Instead, he painted a stately edifice with a rich pulpit and magnificent windows—and near the door, an offering box, marked “Missions,” with the contribution slot blocked by cobwebs. I am so thankful that this is not the picture of Autumn Ridge Church. You have the opportunity to prove it!

At this time I am going to ask all of the student ministries missionaries that are involved in “going into the caves” this summer to come up here to be commissioned and prayed over.

Invest today in the 48 students and adults going to Canada and New York where there are broken people. Over the days of June 25th through July 8th, the High School Ministry will be ministering in the areas of Toronto and New York City. They will minister through urban service projects in the areas of children, homeless, and street evangelism. The Center for Student Missions is the organization with whom they are serving. Their trip cost \$54,000.

You can prove that you are “holding the ropes” for 17 students and 4 adults who will be heading to Texas to work with churches in the West Texas Permian Basin. We will be consulting with churches that have never had impactful student ministries. We will be working with church

staff, key volunteer leaders as well as middle and high school students to help them develop a philosophy of ministry conducive to reaching out to their communities. Our team will also be leading a youth conference for a collection of regional youth programs. At this conference our team will lead worship, do skits, do the speaking as well as be available for individual ministry. The Texas Leadership trip is July 22nd through August 1st. Their trip cost \$21,000.

You can “hold the ropes” today for our 74 Middle School and 25 high School student missionaries will be teaming with Autumn Ridge Children’s Ministry to help with Vacation Bible School. In the afternoons they will be working on several projects around the Autumn Ridge campus. They will also be working with Bamber Valley Elementary School to help with their Summer Day program. The Rochester mission is July 11th through 15th with their mission costing nearly \$3,000.

All together that is nearly 175 missionaries raising nearly \$80,000 to bring the broken back to the King. Wouldn’t it be great if we could raise \$25,000 to show them that we are “holding the ropes?”

As they come...let’s prove today that Autumn Ridge Church will “hold the ropes.” Inside your Ridgeline Bulletin is an envelope, please take that out now and listen as you hear the King calling you today to send out these missionaries who are willing to “go into the caves” and rescue the

broken. I believe that the Autumn Ridge Church Family can meet the goal of raising \$25,000 towards these monumental missions.

You will notice on these envelopes it says, “Invest. Impact. Give.” You can respond today by investing through prayer, we need you to “hold onto the ropes” in prayer for us as we respond as Ziba did. You can also respond today by giving over and above your regular tithes and offerings to Autumn Ridge Church. Simply place your check or money into the envelope marked “Invest. Impact. Give” and you will agree with us that there are no cobwebs on our contribution slot. Perhaps you need time to pray and talk it over, we have made it easy for you to contribute on-line by going to www.autumnridgechurch.org and on the Home Page simply click on the link “Youth Missions” and follow the simple instructions.

As you leave today you can go to the ministry center and get a “Student Classified” giving you the opportunity to have one of these missionaries work for you in a number of ways. Please look over these classifieds and contact them to get some of those spring cleaning chores out of the way, while supporting our mission teams.

The King of Kings is calling us today to “go into the caves”, to rescue the hurting, to “bind up the broken hearted” to “go through the flames,” and to get others to safety in the presence of the King. For once they are there...their position at the King’s Table will overcome their condition!