

CPC Adult Sunday Studies
 Fall 2025
 Total Christ: The Full Vision for His Church
 2 | Missional

Missional - The Presence of God in Jesus Christ through the Holy Spirit

From Last Week: With the gospel as our foundation, we are radically empowered to boldness because we know God loves us, as well as radically humbled because all we have is a gift of grace. Gospel-centered has to do with *what* God did, the *work* of God - covenant sealed once for all - whereas now we're moving to *where* God is and works.

Where was the special saving presence of God in Old Testament times?

- **Eden** - see lessons on Creation and the garden as the special Temple presence of God, where God dwelt among his creation and his "image." He was later "occasionally" present throughout Genesis to special people of the family of God, their altars, Jacob's ladder, etc.
- **Tabernacle** - *Exodus 40:34-38*
 - Not just anyone could approach it (Exod. 33.4-6) and this was where Moses spoke to God "face-to-face" (Exod. 33.7-11)
 - This is what set Israel apart from all other nations - Exod. 33.15-16
 - Purpose of Israel - Exod. 25.8-9; 29.43-46 ("*I will dwell among the people of Israel and will be their God. And they shall know that I am the LORD their God, who brought them out of the land of Egypt that I might dwell among them. I am the LORD their God.*").
 - After the heavenly model - Exod. 25.9, 40; Heb. 8.5ff.
- **Temple** - *1 Kings 8:12-24, 27-30*
 - All the purposes above from the Tabernacle are transferred to the Temple, the 'permanent Tabernacle'

Where is the special, saving presence of God found now?

Jesus "and" the Church!

- Body of Jesus being the new Temple - John. 1.18 [and the rest of the gospel!], Temple's curtain ripped (Matt. 27.51, Mark 15.38, Luke 23.45), Temple destroyed and raised in 3 days, etc.

- If Jesus is the new Temple, and we are joined with Him, we too are becoming the Temple of God (Eph. 4.11-16, 1Peter 2.4-9)
- Eph. 1.22-3 & Eph. 2.19-22
- 1Cor. 3.16-7 - [divisions in the body led to Paul's rebuke:] *"Do you not know that you (pl.) are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in you? If anyone destroys God's temple, God will destroy him. For God's temple is holy, and you (pl.) are that temple."*
- **"On earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6.10)** is a guiding principle and motivation throughout Scripture (for another example, cf. Jn. 1.51 based on Jacob at Bethel in Gen. 28.12, as well as Heb. 10.19-20)
- **Main Scriptural metaphors for the Church:** covenant assembly / gathering, place of mission, people of God, chosen nation, remnant, family, bride, body, building / temple, city, dwelling place of God.
 - Notice the Church is NOT: a theater; a product to offer consumers; merely the most pragmatic way to grow; something Christians came up with to help each other.
- Note: you in plural form ("y'all") is overwhelmingly the use in the NT

You could summarize God's purpose in the world as *not* selecting out individuals to get to heaven, but rather as working to gather a community into His presence on earth as it is in heaven! (Cf. Eph. 2.6, Col. 3.1) We need a whole transformation of what it means to be a Christian if this is the paradigm. Rather than isolated individuals who happen to believe something, to be a Christian is to be apart of a unique community with a unique mission.

Key Text | 1Peter 2:4-12

(See also Acts 2:36-47 and Matt. 28:16-20)

- What are the characteristics of Christians according to this passage?
- What is true of the community's **identity**?
- What is the mission of this community?

Another Key Text | John 14-16 - The Holy Spirit as the Temple of God

John 14 - *"In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? 3 And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come*

again and **will take you to myself**, that where I am you may be also. . . If you love me, you will keep my commandments. 16 And I will ask the Father, and he will give you **another Helper**, to be with you forever, 17 even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be in you. 18 **I will not leave you as orphans**; I will come to you. 19 Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. 20 In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. . . . 23 If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and **we will come to him and make our home with him**. . . . You heard me say to you, I am going away, and I will come to you.' If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. . . . I tell you the truth: it is to your advantage that I go away, for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you. But if I go, I will send him to you."

- vv.2-3 refer to the Church, NOT to heaven, which would have nothing to do with the rest of the passage. "Prepare a place" refers to the temple of God in the OT, and same with "home" in v.23
- Jesus says it's BETTER that he departs and ascends because: 1. We will see "greater works" (14.12) among us than during his incarnation, 2. He will send the Holy Spirit, another Advocate (thus, Jesus was the first "Helper"), 3. The Father and the Son will dwell among us by the Spirit!
- "You" is plural here - he's talking to the apostles as the foundation of the Church
- The Temple of God (14.2-3) can now **go global**, and be experienced in all cultures and languages, rather than in one place (Jerusalem) or one person on earth (Jesus). See Rev. 5.9 and Jesus' command to "make disciples of all nations" (Matt. 28.19).

Key Question: How is the mission of the Church rooted in the gospel itself?

From Lesslie Newbigin's *The Gospel in a Pluralist Society*

1. HOW does mission start?

1. Rather than a burden, "mission begins with a kind of explosion of joy. The news that the rejected and crucified Jesus is alive is something that cannot possibly be suppressed. It must be told. Who could be silent about such a fact? The mission . . . is more like the fallout from a vast explosion, a radioactive fallout which is not lethal but life-giving" (Newbigin, 116).

2. *WHEN is the Church's mission?*

1. Our time in history now is "between Christ's ascension and his coming again, the time when his reign at the right of God is a hidden reality, that time in which signs are granted of that hidden reign but in which the full revelation of its power and glory is held back in order that all the nations - all the human communities - may have the opportunity to repent and believe in freedom" (128)

3. *WHAT is the Church's mission?*

1. "The presence of the reign of God in foretaste. . . the sign of the inbreaking of the kingdom. The Church is not so much the agent of the mission as the **locus** of the mission" (118-9).
2. Jesus didn't write a book! "What he did was to prepare a community chosen to be the bearer of the secret of the kingdom. . . . Through his total consecration to the Father in his passion there should be created a community which would continue that which he came from the Father to be and to do" (133-4).
 1. In a hopeless and disillusioned world, we must be "'indwelling the gospel story . . . able steadily and confidently to live in this attitude of eager hope. . . as sign, instrument, and foretaste of God's redeeming grace for the whole life of society" (232-3)

What does it mean to be "Missional"?

More (though not less!) than being evangelistic, we strive to be missional because God promises to dwell with His people in all their God-given cultures, languages, and demographics through the church. This grounds us in God's global presence, where the **church is the evangelist** for a whole new way of life, showing the world who Jesus is and what it means to follow Him in all our relationships. **Think:** Culturally self-aware, open & inviting, purposeful, holistic evangelism.

What it should look like:

- An emphasis upon **participational** apologetics vs. just declarative apologetics.

- Worship that is both a participation in the **mystery** of Christ's transcendent otherness yet is accessed through the incarnate **presence** of Christ with local mannerisms—transcendent essentials in changing styles.
- A confidence in the outward means of grace as a **missionary** strategy to our world (preaching, sacraments, community, prayers) because the Church being the Church witnesses to who Christ is. More than a church who “does” missions by supporting missionaries, a missional church is itself the missionary.
- **Diverse local expressions** dependent on where each church is located and who its congregation is, respecting the God-givenness of each created person and community, while also sifting through each culture's idols. God is worthy to be praised in every language and God wants to take on the “flesh” of every culture, that his glory may fill the earth!

Note: “Missional,” like “gospel-centered,” is also not one among other values that our church has, as if you can list it along others. Being Missional means being aware of the presence of God in the church, always knowing that we are the *beneficiaries* of God's previous mission to us, as well as the *stewards* of God's ongoing mission. Everything we do should recognize our call to be missional.

Notice how this gets at the heart of the gospel and evangelism:

- If the Christian is simply someone who believes something about Jesus, then evangelism will be about information transfer and intellectual debate.
- If the Christian is simply someone who does good works, then evangelism will be about getting other people to live ethically.
- **However**, if the Christian is someone who is a part of God's kingdom, then evangelism means incorporating people holistically into that community, which is established on the fact of Jesus' reign. It involves the first two options, but also goes well beyond them.
 - We tend to treat **evangelism** like a salesman selling to the consumer who's “always right”, rather than inviting them into the community because Jesus the King already reigns fully and redemptively
 - How can **hospitality**—both in the whole church as well as in individual homes—now be understood as missional?