

Everyday Church

Reflection

Take time together to read Titus 3v3-8.

As you read reflect on who Christ is and the salvation we have received through him. Respond by praising and giving thanks to God.

Everyday Mission

Read 1 Peter 2v9-3v12

Church and Mission

In recent times we have come to view church and mission as two distinct and separate activities. Church is thought of as a meeting, a place to attend or an event to invite friends. Mission is thought of as a special evangelistic programme such as door to door, street preaching or an evangelistic course. However rather than see church and mission as different from each other they are in fact inseparable, two sides of the same coin. Church is Mission and Mission is Church.

Church is *'the community of grace united by the empowering presence of the Holy Spirit. Church is not so much about how we structure ourselves, where we meet, how often we meet, nor even what we do whenever we meet. Church is about who we are as the people of God, living distinctly by grace through the Spirit under the reign of King Jesus, to the glory of our heavenly Father...(Therefore)...'the church is God's primary mission strategy in the world.'* (Timmis & Chester)

Survival Strategy.

The letter of 1 Peter has highlighted for us how as Christians we are on the margins of society, *'aliens and strangers in the world'* (2v11). In God's goodness he has given to us a new family, the church, a community marked by 'sincere love for one another'. Through Christ we have been redeemed from one family for another and it's here that we find the help and support to live as strangers and aliens, in a hostile world.

Mission Strategy.

But the church is so much more than a survival strategy. It is God's mission strategy for the world. Through the church people get to see the work of Christ made real. Lives that have been transformed by his grace and forgiveness. People get to experience life as God intended it to be as we care for and love one another and those around us. The church demonstrates what it is like to live under God's rule. In fact the Christian community is a picture of the heavenly reality on earth.

Question:

How does this change or encourage your view of Church and Mission?

Mission Identity

If church is all about mission then it makes sense that we are all about mission.

In 1 Peter 2v9-10 we are reminded who we are.

'But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.'

The terms and phrases Peter has used to describe us are filled with Old Testament allusions. If we read the Old Testament background to these terms it will help us understand our identity and therefore our purpose.

Chosen people: *'For you are a people holy to the LORD your God. The LORD your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession. The LORD did not set his affection on you and choose you because you were more numerous than other peoples, for you were the fewest of all peoples. But it was because the LORD loved you and kept the oath he swore to your ancestors that he brought you out with a mighty hand and redeemed you from the land of slavery, from the power of Pharaoh king of Egypt.'* Deuteronomy 7v6-8

Royal priesthood: *'Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.'* These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites.' Exodus 19v5-6

Holy Nation: *'I am the LORD your God; consecrate yourselves and be holy, because I am holy. Do not make yourselves unclean..... I am the LORD, who brought you up out of Egypt to be your God; therefore be holy, because I am holy.'* Leviticus 11v44-45

Belonging to God: *'And the LORD has declared this day that you are his people, his treasured possession as he promised, and that you are to keep all his commands. He has declared that he will set you in praise, fame and honour high above all the nations he has made and that you will be a people holy to the LORD your God, as he promised.'* Deuteronomy 26v18-19

Declare your praises: *'Great is the LORD and most worthy of praise; his greatness no one can fathom. One generation commends your works to another; they tell of your mighty acts. They speak of the glorious splendour of your majesty, and I will meditate on your wonderful works. They tell of the power of your awesome works and I will proclaim your great deeds. They celebrate your abundant goodness and joyfully sing of your righteousness....so that all people may know of your mighty acts and the glorious splendour of your kingdom.'* Psalm 145v3-7, 12

By God's grace we are a 'chosen people' created to be a new community, that reflects the beauty and works of God through our lives. We are a 'royal priesthood' making God central in life and calling the nations to find atonement through the sacrifice of Jesus. We are a 'holy nation' a people set apart for God reflecting that God is holy. We 'belong to God', his treasured possession loved and cared for, that we might 'declare the praises of him' who has rescued us and redeemed us through his son.

That's what Church is. That's what Mission is. In other words, as we have seen, '*the community of God's people is to be a missional community.*'

Question:

How do you respond to this 'mission identity'. How does it make you feel and how should it change how we view our life?

Mission Everyday

It's no surprise then that Peter applies our new identity in the context of everyday life.

'Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us. 2v11-12

Rather than see church as a survival strategy it is God's mission strategy. We have been called out from the world to be his chosen people and sent back into the world as a holy people. How we relate to the world in which we live is crucial. We are given four areas of life of what it means to 'live such good lives among the pagans'. Importantly they are all about how we relate to people in everyday life.

First our relationship to our leaders.

'Submit yourselves for the Lord's sake to every human authority: whether to the emperor, as the supreme authority, or to governors, who are sent by him to punish those who do wrong and to commend those who do right.' 2v13-14

Such living will have a profound impact on others.

'For it is God's will that by doing good you should silence the ignorant talk of foolish people.' 2v15

As we live our lives as strangers people will accuse us of being a negative influence in society, intolerant and irrelevant. However by submitting to our leaders we actually show how good we are for society.

Second our relationship to our boss.

'Slaves, in reverent fear of God submit yourselves to your masters, not only to those who are good and considerate, but also to those who are harsh.' 2v18

How we respect our boss matters. Our attitude and behaviour is being watched. In fact a godly respect reflects to others the way of Christ.

'To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, so that you we might die to sins and live for righteousness; by his wounds you have been healed.' 2v21, 24

As people see how we respond to harsh and unjust treatment from our boss they will see the gospel demonstrated – Christ who was treated unjustly and suffered for us through his death.

Third our relationship to our spouse.

'Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands...' 3v1

'Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life...' 3v7

How we treat our spouse will have an eternal impact.

Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behaviour of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives. 3v1-2

Whether we are husbands or wives our behaviour matters. If we live with an unbelieving husband or wife our Christ like behaviour towards them will win them over for Christ. They will be attracted to Christ through the beauty of your love.

Fourth our relationship to the church.

'Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble. Do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult. On the contrary, repay evil with blessing, because to this you were called so that we may inherit a blessing.' 3v8-9

How we live with each other matters immensely. We live before a watching world and sooner or later people will begin to ask why we are so different.

'..Always be prepared to give an answer to everyone who asks you to give the reason for the hope that you have.' 3v15

The way we live as God's family will cause people to ask questions so that we can tell them that it's because of Christ.

Mission is all about everyday life and how we live in relationship to society, our work, our home and the church family. *'Our lives are the evangelistic events. Our life is the apologetic.'* (Timmis and Chester)

Question:

How does this help us see how mission is possible. What will it mean for you to be a missionary?

Everyday Missionaries

Being missional *'is not an event we tack onto our already busy lives. It is our life. Mission should be the way we live, not something we add onto life...We can be missional in everyday ways without even overloading our schedules..'* (J.Dobson)

Look through the following suggestions. How can you begin to implement these ideas?

- Eat with not yet Christians.

We all have to eat so why not make a point of having a lunch/dinner with a friend or work colleague. People are always willing to talk over food.

- Interact with neighbours and serve.

Try meeting neighbours when they are outside. A simple introduction. Ask questions show interest. Offer to help in practical ways.

- Be a regular.

We all like a good bargain and the best deal so we tend to change where we shop and who will fix our car. Try going to the same places or people. Be a regular even if it costs a little more.

- Get involved in the community.

Communities always need volunteers, from local schools to tidy towns, there is always help required. Join sports or social clubs and get involved.

Response.

Pray through what we have learned and pray that our friends and community will come to Christ.