

## Session VI

### Our Mission: How We Know and Love the World

*Therefore, knowing the fear of the Lord, we persuade others. . . . For the love of Christ controls us, because we have concluded this: that one has died for all, therefore all have died; and he died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised. From now on, therefore, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we once regarded Christ according to the flesh, we regard him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; that is, in Christ God was reconciling the world to himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and entrusting to us the message of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God*

2 Corinthians 5:11a, 14–21

## Introduction

This week we'll be unpacking our third and final Value as a church—*Our Mission: How We Know and Love the World*. Similar to our handling of the first two.

1. First, I will first reintroduce the Value to us in more detail.
2. Then we will look at one of our Passions that flow out from this Value.
3. Finally, I will close by briefly identifying some of our Commitments as a church in this regard.

## Partnership Created

I wonder how many of us in this room are aware of the breathtaking reality that we have been created for partnership with God! It sounds almost blasphemous, but it's biblical. Certainly, I do not mean to imply by this that we are in any way equal with God. Far from it. He is the Creator, we are the creature. He is the Potter, we are the clay. He is the Master, we are the slave.

But in an act of amazing condescension and love, we are also partners with Him, called into the holy march of His mission in the world. He doesn't need us to accomplish His purposes, but, amazingly, He wants us with Him in it.

You were created for so much more than the nine to five; than a big house and a picket fence; than family dinners and late night television; than a college degree, a successful career, and a leisurely retirement by the sea. You were created to partner with God on His mission in all of life.

I use the word "created" advisedly, because this has been God's design for humanity from the very beginning. When God created man, He immediately put them on His mission. Adam was called to "work and keep" (Gen 2:15) the garden sanctuary of God's presence. Adam and Eve together were to "be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over [it]" (1:28). They were in essence to move out from Eden with God's

Presence, as God's People, for God's Purpose. Or, to use the language of our Values, they were to move out with Faith, Community, and Mission.

---

*You were created for so much more than the nine to five; than a big house and a picket fence; than family dinners and late night television; than a college degree, a successful career, and a leisurely retirement by the sea. You were created to partner with God on His mission in all of life.*

---

## Partnership Lost

But they abandon Faith in God, break Community with one another, and abort the Mission God gave them in this world. Man breaks partnership with God and goes into business for himself. And the tapestry of creation unravels.

This is the world we live in today. With towers of Babel being erected on every street corner: "Come, let us build ourselves a city and a tower with its top in the heavens, and let us make a name for ourselves" (Gen 11:4). "Who cares about His name?! It's all about my name!"

We mistakenly think that life will be so much better without God breathing over our backs. We think things will finally be fulfilling. But we find that all of this actually has precisely the opposite effect. Life starts to feel mundane and boring, two-dimensional and grayscale. We feel like hamsters in a wheel going around and around but not going anywhere at all.

And even if we are climbing that ladder, getting closer to the top, when we finally get there, while we may be exhilarated for a moment, soon after, an unanticipated objection rises up from inside us: "Is this it? I gave my whole life to get here. I sold my soul to get here. Well now I'm here, and there's nothing!"

This is why it's often the guys at the top that are most susceptible to suicide. So many people build up their towers only to jump off them in the end. Dr. Steven Berglas, a UCLA psychologist who counsels executives on success-induced burnout speaks of a growing phenomenon called "success depression": "People have this notion that 'If I only make CEO, if I only become the top talent agent, if I make my first million, that will do it, all my insecurities will go poof.' You hit the pinnacle, then you wake up the next day and you're still the same insecure [person] you always were."<sup>1</sup>

The success doesn't alleviate the depression, it aggravates it. Because life is about something so much more, and deep down, we all know it. We were created for partnership with God, to be on His mission, to build for the glory of His name.

Maybe some of you are experiencing this to varying degrees even right now. You're on a mission alright, but just not God's. And it's maddening. It's oppressive. It's never enough. It's depressing. God has so much more for you in Jesus!

## Partnership Regained

---

<sup>1</sup> <http://www.bykevingray.com/portfolios/why-successful-young-men-commit-suicide/>.

This is what Paul is identifying for us in 2 Corinthians 5: “He died for all, that those who live might no longer live for themselves but for him who for their sake died and was raised” (v. 15).

Jesus offers us a way out of the downward spiral and back up into the rush of partnership with God. Through the death and resurrection of Christ we have been saved from the tyranny of self. We live for Him now. Or as Paul puts it down in 6:1: “[We] work . . . together with Him.” Life, all of life, is suddenly infused with new meaning, color, and three-dimensionality.

But what exactly does it mean to be on God’s mission? What is it that we are doing? What does it look like to get back into business with God?

Here’s where Ephesians 5:20 comes in to help: “[W]e are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” We are God’s ambassadors, His official representatives in this world. He makes His appeal to the world “through us”. And His appeal is none other than this: “Be reconciled to God.”

Where Adam and Eve were to move out into creation and fill the uninhabited earth with God’s glory, now we are to move out into a creation filled with violence, sin, depravity, oppression, and injustice and call its inhabitants back to God’s glory: “Be reconciled to God.”

God, in His holiness and justice, is furious with the sinner. But God, in great grace and mercy, has poured out His fury upon His Son. It is therefore both “the fear of the Lord” (v. 11) and “the love of Christ” (v. 14) that compels us. We see both God’s wrath and God’s grace, and we cry out to the world: “Be reconciled to God.”

I thought of the great evangelist D.L. Moody here:

When Dwight L. Moody was in London during one of his famous evangelistic tours, several British clergymen visited him. They wanted to know how and why this poorly educated American was so effective in winning throngs of people to Christ. Moody took the three men to the window of his hotel room and asked each in turn what he saw. One by one, the men described the people in the park below. Then Moody looked out the window with tears rolling down his cheeks. “What do you see, Mr. Moody?” asked one of the men. “I see countless thousands of souls that will one day spend eternity in hell if they do not find the Savior.”<sup>2</sup>

Is that the window you’re looking through?

## The Missional Church

It is to the church in particular that God entrusts this “ministry of reconciliation” (v. 18). When we are reconciled to God through Christ (Faith), not only are we reconciled to one another in the church (Community), but we are also given a ministry of reconciliation for the world (Mission). Faith brings us into Community, and our Community is sent out on Mission.

Listen to Richard De Ridder on this:

The church . . . [is] a group which God has called into existence to do something. The marks of the church need to be placed decisively within the framework of the church’s mission. This is where they were first set. For in Acts 2:42 the teaching, fellowship, breaking of bread, and prayers of the newly-formed Spirit-

---

<sup>2</sup> *Today in the Word*, Feb 1, 1997, 6.

filled and Spirit-enlarged disciple fellowship is described within the missionary context of the Pentecost story from which it cannot be extracted.<sup>3</sup>

They were reconciled to God, reconciled to one another, to go out and call the world into the same!

Hear Charles Spurgeon on this same point:

We ought to regard the Christian Church, not as a luxurious hostelry where Christian gentlemen may each one dwell at his ease in his own inn, but as a barracks in which soldiers are gathered together to be drilled and trained for war. We should regard the Christian church not as an association for mutual admiration and comfort, but as an army with banners, marching to the fray to achieve victories for Christ, to storm the strongholds of the foe and to add province after province to the Redeemer's kingdom.<sup>4</sup>

We are not huddling together, hoping to make it to heaven with as few bumps as possible. We are storming the gates of hell and calling for the release of prisoners in Jesus' name! We have been reconciled to reconcile; saved to save; freed to free; loved to love; blessed to bless. And if we die we die, because to lose my life for His sake is to finally find it (Matt 10:39)!

We Value Mission in this church.

---

*We have been reconciled to reconcile; saved to save; freed to free; loved to love; blessed to bless. And if we die we die, because to lose my life for His sake is to finally find it!*

---

## Our Passions

### 1. Holistic Evangelism

If we are on God's Mission, as God's Ambassadors, compelled by a vision of both His holy wrath and free grace, it would be wise for us to give great consideration to what this might look like in our day to day lives. To get at this I want to identify a particular Passion that flows out of our Value at this point: namely, Holistic Evangelism.

#### **What Is Evangelism?**

Let me begin to flesh this out by asking first: What is Evangelism?

Certainly, evangelism is fundamentally the proclamation of the evangel, the gospel, the good news of Jesus Christ. If we do not share this good news, this "message of reconciliation" (2 Cor 5:19), we do not evangelize.

But this announcement of Christ's death and resurrection, is so much more than just a mere information dump. It is an invitation for our listeners to come back to the God who created them, to let Him put them back together, to let Him make them fully human again. In its fullest sense, *evangelization is rehumanization*. It's how the dead come back to life. Christianity is not drab and boring. It is not merely a set of rules or beliefs, it is a new way to be human. And by new I mean old. It's humanity according to ancient design. It's humanity as it should be.

---

<sup>3</sup> As quoted by Harvie Conn in *Evangelism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1982), 35.

<sup>4</sup> *The Soul Winner* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co, 1963), 203-204.

As an illustration, we might consider a scene from C.S. Lewis' Chronicles of Narnia. Aslan has just risen from the dead and he's going through the courtyards and the dungeons of the White Witch's castle and breathing on all the creatures that she had turned to stone. And with the exhale of Aslan's breath, the stone starts to thaw, color starts to come back to the creatures, and they come alive again.

This is what Jesus does through the preaching of the gospel. He exhales His Spirit through the proclamation of His Ambassadors. He does this through you and through me, for people with hearts as cold as stone. Evangelization is rehumanization!

---

*Christianity is not drab and boring. It is not merely a set of rules or beliefs, it is a new way to be human. And by new I mean old. It's humanity according to ancient design. It's humanity as it should be.*

---

#### **What Is Holistic Evangelism?**

Now, why do I say we're passionate about Holistic Evangelism?

When we think of holistic medicine, we think of doctors who are willing to treat their patients as whole people. They aim for your health by approaching you not just physically, but psychologically, socially, etc. They engage all of you in their pursuit to help you.

Well, holistic evangelism can be understood along similar lines. Unfortunately, when most people think of evangelism they have this truncated, narrow view of it. Evangelism is memorizing a technique and passing out tracts. We have this sense that we're only doing evangelism if our hearts are racing, our palms are sweating, and we're about to go approach a stranger to share four spiritual laws or whatever.

While evangelism certainly should involve this kind of direct approach, this is not all that evangelism is. It is not something you do for an hour here or there as the Lord leads or your church compels you. Evangelism in a broader sense should be happening all the time. It's a lifestyle—something you're doing in the everyday stuff of life. Holistic Evangelism means we are living out our full humanity before the world and inviting them into it through Christ.

---

*Evangelism in a broader sense should be happening all the time. It's a lifestyle—something you're doing in the everyday stuff of life. Holistic Evangelism means we are living out our full humanity before the world and inviting them into it through Christ.*

---

I would humbly submit to you that our categories of Faith, Community, and Mission actually serve us well here again. For if God created not just the church, but all of humanity, every person you meet, to exist in His Presence,

as His People, with His Purpose, then it is right for us to consider even unbelievers along the lines of Faith, Community, and Mission.

They too were created for intimate relationship with God (Faith), for loving relationship with others (Community), and for meaningful relationship with the world (Mission). They might no longer have these things, they might be settling for cheap counterfeits of these things, but there's still a residual memory and longing for these things. They've been created in His image, and though the image is marred, it's still there.

When we come and live out our Faith, Community, and Mission before them, it's as if we are breathing on their stony hearts, blowing on the embers of the image of God in them—fanning into flame a desire for the full humanity that is available to them in Christ.

So where a doctor practicing holistic medicine might approach a person along the lines of the physical, mental, and social, a Christian practicing Holistic Evangelism might approach a person along the lines of Faith, Community, and Mission. Let's consider each one briefly now.

## **1. Faith**

Consider evangelism along the line of Faith—people have been created for intimate relationship with God.

Certainly this would include what we usually think of when we think of evangelism. We talk to people about their relationship with God. We knock on doors, we give away gospel tracts, we share with family members over the phone, we call people to repentance and faith. We just go for it!

But this also involves living out our relationship with God before others so that they can see what it looks like. We aren't censoring ourselves. Christians often speak two dialects—one when we're in the church, and one when we're in the world.

- In the church: "How are you doing?" "I'm blessed. God is good. Let me tell you how He's been ministering to me lately."
- In the world: "How are you doing?" "I'm good. I'm enjoying this fall weather. The Warriors' season is about to start. Things are great."

Now why do we do that? It's my contention that the world needs to see our relationship with God, the relationship with God they too were created to have. They may laugh at us, they may say we're weird, but I believe that in those moments we just might be breathing on stone, blowing on the embers of God's image in them, fanning into flame a desire to be truly human again.

And as they awaken to relationship with God they find themselves brought into our Community and set with us on our Mission!

I think of David Lin here and his Meeting Jesus discussion group. I think of Pearl Lim and Kids Club. I think of people like Cathy Craig and Josh McGuire. They just desire to speak the gospel to anyone they meet. Josh is even in the process of learning Spanish right now so that he can more effectively speak to the people in this neighborhood about Jesus.

We want more of this in our church! Let's keep dreaming about how we can evangelize the world along the line of Faith.

## **2. Community**

Consider evangelism along the line of Community—people have been created for loving relationships with one another.

We can get to the message of reconciliation in the way we relate to people. In a world that's forgotten them, that treats them like cogs in a machine, like objects to manipulate, we come in and give them our attention, our time, our care. We look them in the eyes. We listen to their stories. We laugh with them. We weep with them. We love them like Christ has loved us. We treat them like human beings. And in so doing we breathe on the stone, we blow on the embers, we fan the flame!

Consider this example:

Every summer, Dr. Jack Miller at Westminster Theological Seminary takes a large group of students and church members with him for three weeks of street preaching in Dublin, Ireland. They are on the streets almost all day long, witnessing, sharing . . . the gospel. Everyone they speak with is invited to a common meal held in the evening at a nearby church. The meal is quite simple. There are singing, some testimonies, and prayer. Here the unchurched, the curious, the converts, are given a taste of *koinonia* [fellowship]. One student said to me after that trip, "I think the most effective part of our ministry is carried on at the meal table. The guests see the church suddenly as a caring, sharing fellowship; their bargain with God is sealed by a cup of coffee."<sup>5</sup>

No longer are we just telling people the gospel, we are showing it to them. The way we love them, leads them to the love of God. Community leads back to Faith and brings them into the Mission.

This is what Lynn Kuehn is doing with the Sihora Clinic. They're serving the poorest of the poor and loving them to Jesus. This is what Patty Madden is doing with Foster the Bay. Our God is a Father to the fatherless, and we want to love these kids back to Him. This is what Jill LeMoine is doing in my neighborhood. She's just there. She's available to love on people. She's taking neighbors to the hospital. She sets up block parties. She's giving people a taste of the Community they were created for, the Community Christ is ready to redeem them back into.

We want more of this in our church! Let's keep dreaming about how we can evangelize the world along the line of Community.

### **3. Mission**

Consider evangelism along the line of Mission—people have been created for meaningful relationship with the world.

Unbelievers want the world and all that they are doing to have meaning, purpose, to be a part of something big. But they rob themselves of this when they go into business for ourselves. Everything gets small.

Then along comes the church. We have been put on the greatest mission in the universe. And we bring our new humanity into our workplaces, into our classrooms, into our neighborhoods, into our family rooms. We live out a different narrative—one that is written not by the world, the flesh, and the devil but by the Father, the Son, and the Spirit in us. And it's compelling!

We don't work, parent, play, rest, suffer, or even eat and drink like the world. It's all done differently. It all has a richer meaning and greater purpose.

- When the unbeliever eats and drinks he does it with his belly, his appetites, in view (Phil 3:19). When a believer eats and drinks He does it with thanksgiving to his God (1 Tim 4:4). There are dimensions to our

---

<sup>5</sup> Harvie Conn, *Evangelism* (Phillipsburg, NJ: P&R Publishing, 1982), 37.

enjoyment of a good steak that the unbeliever knows nothing about. “My God created this and gave it to me. Thanks you!” And that’s alluring. We’re breathing on stone.

- Or consider what Paul says about our suffering: “[We do] not grieve as others do who have no hope” (1 Thess 4:13). When we suffer, we handle it differently because the mission isn’t about us. It’s bigger than us. And we have a God who says hold on, I’m doing something here. We suffer with hope. And that’s alluring. We’re blowing on embers.
- Or when we work, Paul says we are to “adorn” the gospel (Titus 2:10). We work with integrity and for the good of others. We have a greater purpose than just getting a paycheck or making ourselves look great. We want to make our God look great and show Him off. And we labor out of love for Him. We’re not owned by our job. We’re free. And that’s alluring. We’re fanning the flame.

I think of Sanvi Bruce here. When his job seemed to be on the line and yet he just had this peace. And everyone’s asking, “What’s up? Aren’t you worried?” “My God is in control. He’s going to take care of me.” That’s crazy in Silicon Valley where your job is your life.

And as people see how we relate to the world with this greater Mission, they just might see the God that stands with us in it and be brought to Faith and into our Community.

We want more of this in our church! Let’s keep dreaming about how we can evangelize the world along the line of Mission.

O brothers and sisters, I hope you catch a passion for Holistic Evangelism. Evangelism isn’t merely something you put on your calendar and do for an hour, it’s a lifestyle—it’s being fully human in Christ and calling the world into it as well!

## Our Commitments

As a way of bringing to a close all that we have said throughout this series, let me now invite you to join us in the mission by committing yourself to God with your *time*, *talent*, and *treasure*. When we come under God as the Lord of our lives, when we come into the rush of His mission, we simply give back to Him all that was His in the first place.

- Regarding *time*, He is the Alpha and Omega. And He has numbered our days. Each day is a gift from Him and provides an opportunity for us to give it back to Him in love. We do this by giving our time to Him in devotion, prayer, and worship; by giving our time to gather with His people; and by giving our time to the neighbor and the stranger, the unbelieving and the lost.
- Regarding *talent*, He is one who knit us in our mother’s womb. He is the One who has given us both our native abilities and spiritual gifts. He is the One who has engineered our circumstances and given us the history, experiences, and skill sets that we now have. All of these things are gifts from Him and provide opportunity for us to give them back to Him in love. We do this by using our talents not for the building of towers of Babel but for the building of tabernacles and temples; by using them for the building up of His body in love; and by using them for the common good of neighbor in an effort to see them too come under the loving lordship of Christ.
- Regarding *treasure*, He owns the cattle on a thousand hills. There is nothing that we can give back to Him that He has not already freely given to us (Rom 11:35). It is utterly impossible to out-give God. All of our possessions are gifts from Him and provide opportunity for us to give them back to Him in love. We do this by counting our treasure as nothing compared to the surpassing value of knowing Christ; by giving generously and cheerfully to support the church’s worship and work;<sup>6</sup> and by giving freely to the

---

<sup>6</sup> For more on tithing in the local church, see Appendix 11: Toward the Tithe and Beyond.



unbelieving in hopes that they too will see that a man's life does not consist in the abundance of his possessions (Luke 12:15).

## Conclusion

I pray, as we now bring this class to a close, that you might seriously consider covenanting with us as we seek to know and love the Lord, the church, and the world!

Please refer back to the Covenant Membership Class Checklist (p. ii – 1) to find next steps.