

On Mission Together

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[0 : 00] Have you all been enjoying this series on the church for the last few Sundays? Well, I have too, and I hope that we continue to learn from it, be challenged from it, each one of us.

The idea is we are the church. It's a study in ecclesiology, which is a big word that just means the Bible doctrine that has to do specifically with the church.

We have been adopting some statements that we can all unite around and agree upon from the Word of God. And the first statement is we don't just go to church. We are the church. Let's say it together. Ready?

We don't just go to church. We are the church. Amen. And then the next statement that we have adopted is, ready, let's say it together. The church is not about me. Who's the church about? God. That's right. The church is about God.

Seems like a simple, obvious truth. Everybody would say, yeah, sure, church is about God. But sometimes the way we act, the way we talk, the way we live communicates more that we feel like the church is about us rather than about God.

[1 : 03] So we need to remind ourselves of that continually. And then last Sunday we talked about this. Don't let what is secondary become primary. Let's say that together. Ready? Don't let what is secondary become primary.

What do we mean by that? Don't let our personal opinions about things, our personal agendas get in the way of the main thing, keeping the main thing the main thing. And that is the church is about Jesus. It's not about me.

The mission of the church is to go out and share the gospel with all who will hear it. And that is the main thing to bring honor and glory to Jesus Christ through obedience to him and accomplishing the mission that he gave the church.

So don't let other things, other secondary things, take the place of the main things, the primary things. And so today we're going to look at this one.

This was not original with me. A friend of mine gave it to me, but I love it. I want to share it with you all. Well, as the church, we gather, we grow, we give, and we go. Think about that. Those are some of the things that we have covered already in our series on the church.

[2 : 11] The first couple of weeks we talked about gathering. We talked about how important it is to gather together, to be here as a body of believers, unified together, worshipping together.

How we can encourage one another, grow together from our obedience to God's command together as the church. And then we did talk about growing. And we talked about how it is important for every member of the body to take on their role within the church.

We're not all the same. We're all different, but there is unity in that diversity. And it brings glory to God when people who are so different from one another all take up their roles within the church and serve together, grow together, and take the next step in their journey with Christ together.

A couple weeks ago we talked about giving, how important it is for it to take ownership, financial ownership of our church body and give to support the work that we do.

There's nothing that the church does without the support, direct financial support of its members. And so that is an essential command and ingredient in a healthy church.

[3 : 17] So let's say these together. Today we're going to do the last one. We're going to talk about going. All right? We're going to talk about going. We've got a couple of weeks left in our church series. We're going to kind of do a summary and wrap up at the end.

But today we're talking about the mission of the church, the going. So let's read this together. Ready? We gather, we grow, we give, and we go. That's right.

We gather, we grow, we give, and we go. Alliteration. They all start with the same letter. You know, preachers love alliteration. So it's kind of a memory tool.

Sometimes it sticks in our minds a little better when we do that. But that's all right if it doesn't. So Matt, I just lost this for some reason. There we go. I don't know if you advanced that or if I did, but regardless, here we go.

All right. Our topic today, as we talked about going, is the church on mission together. That is our title. That's our topic that we're going to dive into today from the scriptures.

[4 : 18] The church on mission together. You and I have a common mission from God. It's not just my mission. It's not just your mission. It's our mission together that God gave to his people.

So we are on mission together. That evokes images of nighttime commando raids in my mind. And, you know, because I was a little boy and thought that stuff was cool growing up.

And so that's something that paints a picture in my mind of being on a mission together. On a special mission that we have been commanded by the Heavenly Father himself to fulfill.

So I pray that we are challenged today to accomplish the mission that God has given us. The common mission. Would you stand with me?

Let's go to John chapter 17. John chapter 17. We're going to spend a little time in John 17. Then we're going to turn back a page and be in John 15 for a little bit later. So John chapter 17, beginning in verse 6.

[5 : 24] Let's read together. I have revealed your name to the people you gave me from the world. Jesus is speaking to his father. He's praying to his heavenly father saying, I have revealed your name, God, to the people you gave me from the world.

They were yours. You gave them to me. And they have kept your word. Now they know that everything you have given is from you. Because I have given them the words you gave me. They have received them and have known for certain that I came from you. They have believed that you sent me. Verse 9. I pray for them.

I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those you have given me. Because they are yours. How amazing is it to know that Jesus prays for us?

This isn't the only time in scripture that we read that Jesus prays for us. Another time he says, Satan would desire to have you, to lead you astray, but I have prayed for you.

[6 : 30] That's an incredibly encouraging note to pop back into our mind. Every morning, every day, during those dark moments, Jesus, the Son of God, the Lamb of God, the Messiah, is praying for me.

Y'all ever said you pray for somebody? I have. Sometimes we do it. Sometimes we might forget. Sometimes it's a good idea to stop and do it right then so we don't forget to do it later. But Jesus will never forget.

He'll always be praying for us. And when God makes intercession for us on our behalf with the Father, that can move mountains. So, I pray for them.

And then in verse 10, Everything I have is yours. Everything you have is mine. And I am glorified in them. I am no longer in the world, but they are in the world.

And I am coming to you. This was right before Jesus was crucified. And then resurrected and went home to be with his Father. And so he said, I am no longer in the world.

[7 : 32] I'm coming to you. He knew he was on physically on his way out. But the Holy Spirit would be left behind. And so he said, Holy Father, protect them by your name that you have given me.

Protect them that you have given me by your name. So that they may be one as we are one. I highlighted that. Did you see? They may be one as the Father and the Son are one.

That is his prayer for us. Verse 12. While I was with them, I was protecting them by your name that you have given me. I guarded them. And not one of them is lost, except the Son of Destruction, so that the Scripture may be fulfilled.

Now I am coming to you. And I speak these things in the world, so that they may have my joy completed in them. I have given them your word.

The world hated them. Because they are not of the world. Just as I am not of the world.

[8 : 45] You ever wonder why Christians just don't seem to fit in? It's because we don't. The world hates us because we are not of the world.

And Jesus wasn't of this world. Now that's a different reason than when the world hates us because we are living in a way that would invoke that kind of hate.

When we are unkind, when we are selfish. That's not what this is talking about. But darkness and light cannot come together.

Light erases darkness. Darkness is what happens when the light is gone. They cannot agree together. So the world and God and the things of God will never be compatible.

But Jesus, despite that, impacted this world in a positive way like no one else ever could. So that doesn't mean that because we are not of this world, that we don't leave a positive impact on this world.

[9 : 59] That doesn't mean that just because we cannot dive in and agree with everything that this world promotes, that doesn't mean that we can't make a profound difference in this world.

Jesus was magnetic. He drew people to Him. And He wants us to do the same thing. Even though we are strangers in this world.

So let's dive back into the text. Verse 18. Last two verses that we're reading today. Verse 18. He said in verse 16, They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world.

So sanctify them by the truth. And your word is truth. Then in verse 18, As you sent me into the world. Here we go. I also have sent them.

Let's change that pronoun because He's praying to His Father on behalf of us. And so let's change it to us. He has sent, He said, I also have sent them. So He has sent us into the world.

[11 : 02] He has sent us into the world. Verse 19. I sanctify myself for them so that they also may be sanctified by the truth. God, I pray for our church right now.

I pray for myself, my family, and everyone represented in this building this morning. Those watching online, we're grateful that they are able to, through technology, have a part continually in our service.

We know there's people who can't be here and would love to. But God, our church, those away on trips, those at home sick, think of Nicole and others who are not able to be here right now because of extenuating circumstances.

I pray on behalf of everyone that you have given us that we would be on mission together. That's not going to look the same for every person, but you have sent each of us into this world and you have not yet called us home.

So I pray that we would be on mission together. That we would hear from your word this morning and let it minister to our hearts in Jesus' name. Amen. You may be seated.

[12 : 13] Thank you for standing for that extended period of time. We don't always do that, but sometimes we like to give honor to the scriptures by doing that. John 17.

Jesus gives us our commandment. This is not the only place. There are many other places, Matthew 28, Mark 16, many other places throughout the scriptures that God gives us the command to go out.

God has commissioned his church as messengers, as ambassadors to go out. So here's the problem. There's really no option for a believer to not be willing to accept his mission from God.

There is no option for that. If a believer is not making an attempt, a personal attempt, to fulfill the mission from God, then that believer is wrong in his relationship and thinking about God.

That's not coming from me. That's coming from the word of God. Time and time again, God commands us to obey his commandments in going out and bringing them in.

[13 : 30] What does that mean? Is that bringing them into church? Well, that's a great place to bring them because you know that they will hear the gospel there. You know that they will meet other believers in Jesus there.

And you know there's an increased opportunity for them to continually be presented with chances to receive Christ. So that's a great place to bring them in.

But that's not the only thing. That's not the only goal that we have is inviting people to church. So Jesus said he wants us to go out and send them in.

Now, before he did this, let me back up a little bit. He said, I have sent them into the world. That's our mission. But before he got there, he said, may they all be as one.

May they all be one as you, Father, are in me and I am in you. As we are unified, as you and I, God, are together of one mind, of one accord, may they be the church.

[14 : 32] May the church be that way as well. So, point number one, if you're writing anything down, point number one, we are to be a unified body. A unified body.

That's what we are. The church is not a building, right? The church is a body. We thank God for our building, but if the building was destroyed, we could still meet and have church.

We'd figure out a way to do it because we are a body of believers, of Jesus' followers, and we are to be unified in that body. A body that's not unified doesn't operate very well, does it?

Of course not. How many of y'all work in the medical field? Anybody? Slip your hands up. Don't be ashamed of it. Slip your hands up. There you go.

Y'all have seen firsthand when the body doesn't work right. Correct? If you're a parent, you've raised kids, you've seen firsthand. Everyone has seen firsthand what happens when the body is not unified, when it's not working together in cohesion, cohesively with all its different parts.

[15 : 38] So we are to be a unified body. I like this quote. I know it's kind of small and probably a little bit hard to read. It says, it is not so much the case that God has a mission for His church in the world as that God has a church for His mission in the world.

Mission was not made for the church. The church was made for mission. God's mission. That is the polar opposite way of thinking, I believe firmly.

After 20 years of preaching, I believe firmly that most churches do not think this way. They might claim this line of thinking, but that's not really probably how they operate.

So if we were able to get to the place where we operated this way, we'd probably be setting ourselves apart from a lot of the churches in America. And I believe tearing down some of the walls that limit God from working through our church how He wants to.

So the idea here is that God did not ordain the church as that is the main thing and then come up with a job for the church to do. God had a mission before time ever began.

[16 : 54] It's a diametric shift in our way of thinking that would then trickle down to the other parts of our lives. So if you are going to be a Jesus follower, then you can't just be a casual Christian.

If you're going to claim Jesus Christ, then you can't just say, oh yeah, I go to church on Sundays because that's what you're supposed to do. Jesus talks about those kinds of churches in Revelation and He says, we talked about it a little bit earlier, He said, I'd rather you be hot or I'd rather you be cold.

This middle of the road stuff, this lukewarm stuff, He just wants to spit it out. That's not what it's about. He said, either be for me or be against me. That doesn't mean He's requiring perfection as a Christian or as a church, but He is requiring a commitment to Him that says, I will strive to be more like Jesus every day.

I will strive to fulfill the mission that God gave me as part of this church. And if I fail, I know God forgives me and I will get up and try again. It's so important to get up and try again because we're all going to fail.

We're all going to miss opportunities to share the gospel with somebody. We're all going to chicken out sometimes. We're all going to get distracted by life. We're all going to let the secondary things become primary things.

[18 : 21] We're all going to not do the things that we should do sometimes. Paul the Apostle wrote about it throughout his letters that we read in the New Testament time and time again how he wishes that he was better at doing the things God wants him to do.

But when we continually say, I committed to this, I'm not going to give up on God. I'm not going to give up on seeking him daily. I'm not going to give up and just say, forget it.

This is just who I am and everybody's going to have to be okay with that. Now we probably all know somebody like that or multiple people like that. Well, this is just who I am and I'm not going to change.

Well, that's unfortunate because what if God wants to change you? Then you're saying, sorry God.

Well, that's a sad and depressing thing to see from a child of God that Jesus shed his blood for.

Let his only son die and suffer for. So this kind of shift in our thinking, God doesn't have a mission for the church.

[19 : 30] God has a church for his eternal mission. His eternal mission is to bring glory to himself. His eternal mission as it regards to mankind is to redeem or to buy back those who went astray.

And that's us. That's the people on this earth. Jesus said he came to seek and to save those who are lost.

So, that's the mission and the church was created to fulfill the mission.

Our common mission unites us. Each one of these sermons in this series has, by God's grace, been building blocks on top of one another to get to this point. we must gather together. We shouldn't forsake that. It's easy to stay at home and sleep in on Sunday morning. We shouldn't fight and bicker back and forth and talk badly about each other and spread rumors and all this kind of stuff that tears us up from the inside.

[20 : 49] We shouldn't let the secondary things become the most important things or let them distract us or pull us away from the most important things. Remove the focus from what's truly important.

But all of this is leading up to the mission of the church. If we are just gathering and singing and hearing the preaching and then it doesn't go and change how we live and more than that, more than just changing us, it's not just all about us, remember that?

More than just changing us, it's not affecting others that we encounter throughout the week. If that is not happening, then we're not accomplishing the mission.

Then we're just nice people and we've got a nice little social club here. And we all more or less like each other and get along and fellowship together and all that and it's a nice enjoyable thing, but we're not really accomplishing the mission that God gave us.

So that is what should unite us as a church, our common mission. Jesus said, I have sent them into the world.

[22 : 06] Otherwise, y'all, as good as you think this is, heaven's going to be so much better. Let's just get on home to heaven and it'll be great.

It'll be wonderful. But if God is not ready to call us home to heaven, it's because he's got a divine purpose, a divine mission for each of us individually that works together and unites us together as the church.

Let's look over now in John 15. Turn the page back to John 15. We'll spend just a few minutes here and then we'll be done this morning.

John 15 verse 1. We're going to read the first eight verses. For sake of time, I'm going to go ahead and read. I am the true vine. That's Jesus. That's not me, okay? Jesus is talking. He says, I am the true vine.

What does he mean by that? Jesus always spoke allegorically. Now, I can't say always, but so much of the time. You know, you read the parables, he would get up there and people are like, what does he mean by that? I am the true vine and my father is the gardener.

[23 : 11] So he's painting a picture here. We got the horticulturalists in the room. Did I get that one right? So he's probably appealing, you know, to this demographic here.

And he says, every branch in me that does not produce fruit, God the father removes and he prunes every branch that produces fruit so that it will produce what?

More fruit. That's why we prune things back, right? See, God knew that before science ever figured it out. God created all of that so he knew exactly how it should work.

In verse 3, you are already clean because of the word that I have spoken to you. Remain in me and I in you. Just as a branch is unable to produce fruit by itself unless it remains on the vine, neither can you unless you remain in me.

I am the vine, you are the branches. The one who remains in me and I in him produces much fruit because you can do nothing without me. What are you talking about?

[24 : 20] I can do all kinds of things without God. I can go to bed, I can get up, I can go eat, I can work, I can argue and fight and I can do all kinds of things on my own, God.

Yeah, you can't produce anything spiritual apart from God. You can't produce true spiritual fruit that remains apart from God. You can draw attention to yourself, you can accomplish what seem to be good and helpful tasks.

There's all kinds of world relief organizations that have nothing to do with God and they accomplish a lot of what we would call good in the world. But the reality is none of that will bear true spiritual fruit unless it comes from God because He is divine.

He's divine. It's got to come from Him or else it's something else. It's something else completely. It's not true spiritual fruit.

So I'm challenging you, do you see true spiritual fruit in your life? I am the vine, you're the branches. Verse 6, if anyone does not remain in me, here's the scary part, he is thrown aside like a branch and he withers.

[25 : 37] They gather them, throw them into the fire and they are burned. But if you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you want and it will be done for you.

My Father is glorified by this. Y'all, when we read things like this in Scripture, we ought to pay attention. When we see a statement that says, my Father is glorified by this, colon, everybody knows what a colon does, it introduces what's about to come after it.

Pay attention. Here it is. My Father is glorified by this, that you produce much fruit fruit and prove to be my disciples.

If we took a poll in this room and said, are you a disciple of Jesus? I guarantee you we would get over 90%, if not higher, of the people in this room saying, yes, I am a disciple of Jesus.

And then I would say, prove it. Prove it. That's what Jesus said. You can prove to be my disciples if you produce fruit.

[26 : 52] So if you're not producing fruit, why in the world should we believe that you're a disciple of Jesus? If I'm not producing fruit in my life, and I get up here and open the word of God and preach to you on Sunday morning, why in the world should you listen to anything I have to say?

Because I'm not producing spiritual fruit in my life. So you have every reason to doubt whether or not that's a true disciple of Jesus.

Well, that's not very nice. Folks, we don't get to make the rules. God does. This is his world. This is his plan of redemption. This is his story.

We're just part of it. So that's the challenge. We are, we, God called us to be, part of our mission is to be a unified body. But then secondly, we should be a useful branch.

What do you do with branches that aren't useful? What do you do with branches that don't produce fruit? You cut them off. You gather them up and you burn them. That's what it said in the text.

[28 : 00] I don't want to see that happen to any of us in this church. church. But I can promise you this. It will. It will happen.

Unfortunately, despite all of our best efforts and best intentions, there will be people in our church who God decides to cut off, gather up, and get rid of.

Does that mean they're going to go to hell? Well, if they've never put their faith in Jesus, then yes.

But I believe specifically, this is talking about people who have put their faith in Jesus, but they have allowed their own flesh to suffocate the Holy Spirit in their life, and they do not produce any spiritual fruit.

They don't go share the gospel with people. They don't let God transform someone else's life because of their efforts on his behalf and the Holy Spirit taking hold of those efforts and magnifying them, making them so much more powerful than they could ever be on their own.

That doesn't happen with those people. They don't produce the fruit of kindness and compassion. I mean, you can look at the lists of the fruit of the Spirit and say, is that me? Am I that person?

[29 : 08] And if not, I need to put my own faith under the microscope and say, have I ever really put my faith in Jesus? Or am I just kind of going along with the flow? That's why every morning, every Sunday morning, at the end of this time, I always ask, is there someone who needs to put their faith in Christ today?

And I will always do that every Sunday after church. church. Because I truly believe there are still people in this room who have not yet done that. Holding out.

You're not quite aware of what we're talking about. Whatever the reason is, I believe God is still giving you opportunities. But there's going to come a day when you get your last opportunity.

And if you turn that down, seal your own fate. I don't want that to happen. Turn to Jesus today.

Whether it's for salvation and forgiveness of sins, or whether it's turning back to God and saying, God, please produce fruit through me.

I am an open, willing vessel, willing servant. I can't go out and accomplish the fruits of the Spirit on my own. I can't go out and accomplish, reproduce myself spiritually by sharing the gospel with someone who doesn't know Jesus and seeing them turn to Christ and seeing there's my living, breathing, spiritual fruit right there.

[30 : 28] Say, God, do that through me because I want to be a useful branch. I want this church, more than anything, to be a useful branch for God.

He is the vine. We are the branches. Let's be branches that bear fruit. Check out this advertisement. Anybody familiar with the story of Shackleton, the explorer?

I got a book on Shackleton's way of leading, his leadership philosophy, many, many years ago when I was a teenager, I think it was.

That's the kind of presence my parents got me when I was a teenager. They got me books on leadership, Shackleton. Anyway, they didn't get me video games, so there we go. Men wanted. Here's the advertisement that Shackleton put out when he was getting ready to take his expedition to Antarctica. Yeah. Men wanted for hazardous journey, small wages, bitter cold, long months of complete darkness, constant danger, safe return, doubtful, but honor and recognition in event of success.

[31 : 42] Ernest Shackleton. Do you think people were just knocking on the door, beating down the door of 4 Burlington Street to sign up for his expedition?

Probably not. But when he put it out there, he probably had a pretty good idea that whoever signed up was ready for whatever was going to face them. Folks, I'm telling you that as we served Jesus, he did not promise an easy road.

He did not promise that we'd always win the popularity contest. He didn't promise that our values would always line up with the cultural values around us.

He didn't promise that family relationships would always be strong. He didn't promise that everybody would like you, that everybody would always be patting you on the back, that everybody would give you notice for the good things that you do.

But someday, honor and recognition will come. And you know what we'll do with that honor and recognition? We'll turn right around and give it back to God. That's what we see.

[32 : 54] He will give us the crowns, and then we will cast those crowns back at his feet. It's a hazardous journey. The pain is not always great.

Sometimes it can feel cold. Those around us tend to drift away. Sometimes it can feel dark, even though we know that Jesus is the light.

There is constant spiritual danger. There's spiritual warfare going on around us every day, even when we don't realize it. This world will not always be safe, but Jesus will carry us safely home. He'll carry us safely home. John 15, you didn't choose me, I chose you. I like how the New Living Translation put this verse in particular.

You didn't choose me, I chose you. I appointed you to go and produce lasting fruit. To go and produce lasting fruit.

[34 : 02] So a key thought for today, we'll have our takeaway in just a moment. A key thought for today. Our church, our church needs each branch to produce lasting fruit.

Each branch. I'm looking at every face in this room. God has brought us together. He does not make mistakes.

God has brought us together. For this moment. We're not guaranteed tomorrow, but he has brought us together for this moment. Each branch.

Each and every branch. You've seen the branches and then the little twigs that come off of them, you know? The church is kind of like the branch and we're kind of like the twigs that sprout off. We need every twig.

We need every branch to produce lasting fruit. Because if you don't, and you don't, and you don't some more, and years later you still don't, I don't know when, but some point in there, the gardener is going to come and snip off your branch.

[35 : 12] And that's it. And if you weren't a believer and you never put your faith in Jesus, then eternal punishment in hell is your destiny.

If you were a believer and you did put your faith in Jesus, but you never opened yourself up to the Holy Spirit of God and let him produce fruit in you, then you will be brought home early.

Your twig will be cut off and you'll be home in heaven with nothing to show, no honor to give, certainly no honor to receive.

So, our church needs it. One of our key values of our church, let's say them together if you remember them.

Ready? Let's say loving God, seeking truth, serving people. This one's on the screen. Let's try that again.

[36 : 09] We all need to familiarize with ourselves with that more as we begin to do decorations and different things in our church. We're going to try to get those up on the walls and out in front so we know what our church is about.

We're continually reminded of the values of our church. Loving God, seeking truth, serving people. Let's say them together. Ready? Loving God, seeking truth, serving people.

So, our third value here is all about mission. The best way that we serve people, I didn't create that slide by the way, Tabitha Pierce created that slide and she did a great job. The best way that we can possibly serve people is to share Jesus with them, is to go on mission as the church.

And so, that's our takeaway this morning. We serve people best by introducing them to our master. You and I are servants. Everyone in this world is a servant.

You're all serving something. Every one of you is serving something. Everyone has a master. The master is either sin or it's the Savior.

[37 : 13] So, we introduce the lost world who's serving the wrong master to our master and say, this is a whole lot better master.

You can trust what he has to say. You can obey him. And he will not lead you astray. He will not lead you to the path to destruction.

So, we serve people best by introducing them to our master. That is our mission. And we are on mission together.

We should be united in our mission, a united body of believers, and a useful branch. As individual members of that united body, we should be, each of us, a branch that produces fruit.

So, that's my challenge daily to myself, to my family. Men, I encourage you to keep that before your wife and your children. Mothers, I encourage you to keep that before your children.

[38 : 10] And wives, keep it before your husband too. Two, we all must keep each other accountable. One, are we keeping the main thing? The main thing. And the main thing is the mission.

So, let's keep the mission at the top of the heap. Let's keep the mission in the forefront of our minds and say, God, don't let me be a branch that doesn't bear fruit. Let's pray together.

Lord Jesus, I thank you so much for your continual challenge from the word of God. I ask right now, God, if there's someone here who doesn't know you, as their personal, personal Savior, Father and friend, that they would not leave this building this morning without having a true, genuine encounter with Jesus.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.