

Arbor Foundations
30 – What is the Church Sent out to Do?
May 26, 2019

Mission of the Church

Mission of God

1. The missio dei is to build for himself a kingdom of priests who will worship him forever.
2. His goal is to re-Edenize the world and re-Edenize a people for himself of all people groups who will be called by his name.
3. As we learned last week, only God can build his kingdom as it must be built by a stone not cut with human hands. However the Lord has chosen to use means to do so such as Abraham and the church.

What Mission of the Church is NOT

1. Not identical with global mission. We know that global mission is a part of the church's mission, but it does not seem that the church only exists to send out missionaries as then the church (even in Acts) does more not on mission than on mission.
2. Charity/outreach. Individual Christians are called to act kindly and help those in need, but though there is evidence of the church doing this, there is no evidence of a direct command for the church to act in charity.
3. Social justice/political lobbying. The kingdom is a spiritual reality now and an earthly reality only when God recreates the world as his final step of re-Edenization so social justice endeavors are not part of what God has commissioned because only he can fix the world.
4. The sum of all Christians are called to do. We are looking for the mission of the gathered church collective not individual Christians.
5. Fixing the world. We can't so we are not asked to.
6. The same as the mission of God, but it is related.
 - A. Again only God can accomplish his mission to re-Edenize the world and a people.
 - B. But for the re-Edenization of a people, he does use instruments to do his will as the hands and feet of Christ.
 - i. Acts 1:1-11. Luke's prologue to Acts, the pre-ascended resurrected Christ.
 - a. Luke refers to his Gospel as "all that Jesus began to do and teach."
 - b. Luke recounts that Jesus spent forty days teaching his disciples of the kingdom and to await the promise of the Spirit.

- c. Jesus further states that they will be witnesses of Christ in Jerusalem, Judea, Samaria, and unto the uttermost (which becomes a geographical outline of the book).
- ii. Acts 9 - Saul's conversion – the only other time Luke includes the words of Jesus within the narrative of Acts
 - a. v. 4 “Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?”
 - b. v. 5-6 “I am Jesus whom you are persecuting. But rise and enter the city, and you will be told what you are to do.”
 - c. v. 11-12 “Rise and go to the street called Straight, and at the house of Judas look for a man of Tarsus named Saul, for behold, he is praying and he has seen in a vision a man named Ananias come in and lay his hands on him so that he might regain his sight.”
 - d. v. 15-16 “Go, for he is a chosen instrument of mine to carry my name before the Gentiles and kings and the children of Israel. For I will show him how much he must suffer for the sake of my name.”

What the Mission of the Church Is

Matthew 28:18-20, “And Jesus came and said to them, ‘All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.’”

- The commission to the disciples is based on the fact that all authority has been given to Jesus. In other words, the commission to the disciples is based on the kingdom of Christ.
- The mission of the disciples is to make disciples of “all nations.”
 - *Ethnos* in the biblical idiom does not refer to geopolitical entities, but ethno-linguistic groups, in essence the mission of the church is to make disciples of all people groups.
 - But one may note this does not seem to be how the sentence reads in English. But note that in Greek, there is only the one imperative/command (make disciples) whereas going, baptizing, and teaching obedience, all serve as imperatival participles of means for that central command.
- Finally, the encouragement is given to the disciples that Jesus will be with them always, to the end of this very age, which is still ongoing, suggesting that this promise and the commission it accompanies is ongoing as well.
- This coheres with the conclusion of Acts 28 with an incomplete story, and an incomplete fulfillment of Acts 1:8. Luke there invites the reader as well to partake of the disciples' mission to be witnesses of the kingdom and the act of the cross that inaugurates it.

- So the mission of the church is to make disciples of all people groups, both locally and abroad, but making disciples is not the same as making converts, but teaching them to observe the commandments and live.
 - Yet Paul tells us in Galatians 3:3, “Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?”
 - Sam Allberry, “The way in is the way on.”¹ The same gospel of the kingdom that makes converts is also key to continued discipleship.
- So our mission and goal is to proclaim the kingdom as a means of making disciples of all people groups, not to build the kingdom.
- But this is a commission that we are guaranteed success in chapter 24, verse 14 of Matthew’s account, Jesus says, “And this gospel of the kingdom will be proclaimed throughout the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come.”
- Additional verses: Mark 13:10, 14:9; Luke 24:44-49, John 20:21

Church Planting

1. Church planting is not what the church is sent out to do, but the church may use it as a strategic means to accomplish its mission, specifically in reaching unreached people groups throughout the world.
2. When church planting is used as a means, the goal should be to produce self-governing, self-reproducing, and self-correcting churches.
3. Church planting is best done by those local to the area and the culture (“indigenously”). The American church does not have all the answers for churches throughout the world and should not place our church culture directly into another culture. However, in some places, such as the Middle East and China, the peoples are so unreached that at first, outsiders have to evangelize and plant the church, but even then, the hope should be that a local leader can be raised up and then that church can work to plant further churches.

So What?

1. As a church, we will focus on discipleship of all people groups and not mere cultural revitalization.
2. Knowing that some physical help is necessary for being able to have Gospel conversations and that individual Christians are called to look out for the poor and helpless, we will still engage in efforts to help the community improve.
3. The mission of the church is to make disciples, and most of you are a church member, which means you need to be on about both being and making disciples of Jesus Christ.

¹ Sam Allberry, “The Way In is the Way On,” Sermon, Chapel at Cedarville University, Cedarville, OH, April 5, 2018.

4. The mission of the church is not just to make disciples of those like us, but of all people groups. There are people groups in Dayton that need the gospel. Let us bring it to them.
5. The gospel must always remain on our lips as we engage in conversations at church and throughout the week with those both inside and outside the fold.

For Further Study

DeYoung, Kevin and Greg Gilbert. *What is the Mission of the Church?: Making Sense of Social Justice, Shalom, and the Great Commission*. Wheaton: Crossway, 2011.

Foundations SS Class. “22 - Discipleship.”

Foundations SS Class. “29 - Kingdom of God.”