

Members are Missional | Genesis, Matthew, Revelation

Good morning church, if you have a Bible go ahead and turn to Genesis chapter 1 verse 28.

This morning we are looking at the last topic in our entire Ekklesia series. This is it. We are landing the plane on this series today.

We have looked at the church's foundation, the church's focus, and now we are finishing up the church's function.

So starting next week Brad will begin a series on the Lord's prayer that I am pretty excited about.

But today we finish up the Ekklesia series looking at how we as church members are called to participate in the mission of the church.

If you remember a few months ago, Brad covered that the focus of the church is the mission to make disciples.

So what I want to do this morning is spend some time discovering how God's mission has been

unchanging for his people since the beginning of time.

We will look from Genesis to Revelation and see how God has been creating a people for his mission since creation.

Then I want to look at some common distractions that get us off track in participating in God's mission.

Let me pray for us and we will get going beginning here in Genesis 1.

Prayer.

Genesis 1:28 | God's Mission Revealed

The first thing I want us to see about God's Mission is His Mission revealed.

As we look at verse 28, let's remember the scene.

We are introduced to the creator of the universe, God Himself and so far he has created the heavens and earth.

He has separated the land and water, made vegetation, and filled the water and air with creatures.

Then on day six, he begins to make creatures to fill the land, and in verse 26 he decides to make mankind.

In verse 28 we are told humanity's mission, and God tells them their purpose.

Genesis 1:28 tells us,

“And God blessed them. ‘And God said to them, “Be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth and subdue it, and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth.””

What I want to highlight here is the phrase “be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth.”

This is the first task given to man and woman. To bear children who would fill the earth.

But think what kind of people would have filled the earth?

This command is before sin enters the world, so any children they had would be in a harmonious relationship with God.

A worshipper of God.

One of my seminary professors put it this way,

“Consider for a moment what would've happened if Adam and Eve had never sinned. What kind of people would have filled the world? The entire planet would have been filled with worshipers on mission to glorify the great name of God in every place they would have gone and everything they would have done with every waking thought and breath.”¹

From the beginning, God has planned for humanity to multiply worshipers in his creation.

We see in this passage God's mission revealed.

For men and women to be in a relationship with Him working to create more and more worshipers.

¹ Mark Liderbach, *Chasing Infinity*.

However, we see in Genesis 3 this mission becomes distorted. Instead of focusing on the worship of God, Adam and Eve begin to worship themselves.

In chapter 3 we see the Serpent lies to Eve and tries to convince her that God doesn't really know best, and instead if she eats the forbidden fruit, she will become like God.

Genesis 3:5 says, *"For God knows that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God, knowing good and evil."*

In that moment, Eve trades the worship of her creator for the worship of herself, thinking she can now be her own god.

And at this moment, the mission of God becomes broken.

Now the mission is misdirected. Instead of the worship of God being primary, we see the worship of self grow.

God has created us as worshipers so we will always worship something or someone, but...

Worship is now centered on the creation and not the creator.

This distortion to God's mission becomes so bad that God starts over with humanity with Noah and the flood in chapter 6

But even with starting over, God's mission remains. He gives Noah the same mission as Adam and Eve.

In Genesis 9:1 God tells Noah, *"be fruitful and multiply and fill the earth."*

Again, God's mission is the same, fill the earth with worshipers.

Even in the midst of sin and brokenness, God's mission is the same

Then we are introduced to Abraham in Genesis 12, and in the story of Abraham we see a central truth of God revealing his mission.

God does not have a mission for his people, but rather he creates a people for his mission.

This people God is creating begin again with Abraham.

In Genesis 12:1-3 God tells Abraham,

“Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. ² And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. ³ I will bless those who bless you, and him who dishonors you I will curse, and in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.”

And in Genesis 15:4-6 God tells Abraham,

“And behold, the word of the Lord came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” ⁵ And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” ⁶ And he believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

God is calling Abraham to trust him, that beginning with Abraham, God is going to make a great nation, he is going to give him offspring as much as the stars in the sky.

Throughout much of the Old Testament we see this creation of a people being formed as the nation of Israel.

God creates this nation, these people to continue to carry out his mission.

He calls them multiple times to this mission of His.

Beginning in Exodus 19 before giving them the 10 commandments, God calls for the nation to be a kingdom of priests.

We know the idea behind this call, priest represented God before others, so God is calling Israel to represent him among the nations.

Through the prophet Isaiah God also calls his people who are in rebellion back to be a light to the nations.

Isaiah 49:6 tells us, *“It is too light a thing that you should be my servant to raise up the tribes of Jacob and to bring back the preserved of Israel; I will make you as a light for the nations, that my salvation may reach to the end of the earth.”*

The psalms also speak to this call of mission as well when we the psalmist say in Psalm 67,

“May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, Selah that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you!”

But we know just like Adam and Eve, this people God has created continues to worship themselves and idols of creation instead of giving their worship to the Creator.

Israel worship’s God for a season, they serve as a witness on mission with God for other nations, then they turn to worship idols and creation and cannot fulfill God missional call.

So the story of God’s people in the Old Testament is a story of misguided worship because of misdirected mission.

God’s Mission Redeemed

This misguided worship and misdirected mission can only be corrected by one thing.

A new heart

A heart that has been redeemed from sin

A heart that is redirected to worship God.

We see this happen in the New Testament as God comes to us in the person and work of Jesus to redeemed His mission.

I can remember the first time I began to understand the magnitude of God’s mission being redeemed when I went overseas for the first time on a mission trip.

Illustration: Moldova Trip

- Frank & BSU
- English Camp
- Worship
- English, Romanian, Russian

God had not just redeemed me for his mission, but God is redeeming people from all places and people to join him in what he is doing in the world.

I think it is pretty clear from the gospels and the New Testament that Jesus is calling and creating a new people for His mission.

A redeemed people.

Matthew 4:19 clearly shows us this truth.

When we think about the book of Matthew starting in verse one.

Matthew has told us about Jesus' genealogy, his birth, his baptism, and his temptation. Then in chapter 4 Jesus begins his public ministry.

When Jesus calls his first disciples to himself this is what he says,

"Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men."

These first disciples Jesus calls might not have known all what it would mean to follow Jesus.

But, they knew that in following Jesus they would be fishing for others.

They would be calling others to follow Jesus.

They would be in a sense multiplying worshipers.

So this first call for them to follow Jesus was Jesus' invitation for them to be with him and clearly see what it meant to live their life in step with the mission of God.

God Himself comes down to be with us to redeem us and redirect our worship and mission.

And what Jesus comes and does for the disciples, he calls them to do for others. And he calls us to do as well.

Which leads us to the most popular mission passage there is, Matt 28:19-20.

"¹⁹ 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, ²⁰ teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age."

Matthew 28 in many ways is full circle.

At the beginning of Matthew in 4:19 Jesus calls the disciples to follow him and be on mission with him.

Now after being with him, he commissions them to be about the mission of making disciples.

Making and multiplying worshipers.

This passage is usually referred to as the Great Commission, but with the whole picture of God's mission in view it should be called the Continued Commission.

Because God's mission has been the same since Genesis.

He created a people for his mission and now Jesus has redeemed a people for his mission.

And this redeemed people for God's mission is what we call the church.

Jesus' work on the cross and resurrection does two things that frees us up to carry out God's mission for multiplying worshipers.

It redeems us from the power and payment of sin by Jesus' death paying the debt we owed and his resurrection destroying the power of sin over us.

And it reorients our heart to worship the creator and not the creation.

So now with a redeemed and reoriented heart we can carry out the mission of multiplying worshipers.

Paul actually joins these two ideas together.

The redemption found in Christ and the call to the mission of God in 2 Corinthians 5:17-21

Paul tells us

¹⁷ Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation. The old has passed away; behold, the new has come. ¹⁸ All this is from God, who through Christ reconciled us to himself and gave us the ministry of reconciliation; ¹⁹ 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. ²⁰ Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God. ²¹ For our sake he made him to be sin who knew no sin, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.

If you have ever wondered, “what is my salvation for?” This is your answer.

We have been saved for God, from Sin, into the Church, and onto Mission

We see in this passage that it is God that does the saving. Jesus has paid for our sin and reconciled us to God.

And Paul here is writing to believers in the local church found in Corinth.

And he is calling that church and the members of it to be on mission with God, being ambassador for Christ.

So we must understand our salvation is for God, from Sin, into the church, and onto mission.

So if God’s mission has clearly been revealed and now through Jesus His mission has been redeemed, how does it end?

Where is the mission of God leading?

God’s Mission Realized

We see a picture of the end of God’s mission in Revelation 7:9-10

We see God’s mission become realized.

⁹ After this I looked, and behold, a great multitude that no one could number, from every nation, from all tribes and peoples and languages, standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, with palm branches in their hands, ¹⁰ and crying out with a loud voice, “Salvation belongs to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb!”

This passage speaks to a vision the apostle John has of the end of the story. When all is said and done, John sees God’s mission will be realized.

The mission of God will be fulfilled.

He will multiply worshipers of every nation, tribe, and language.

Illustration: China trip

- BSU / Christmas in China
- College campus
- Meeting with student in tea shop
- Led to Jesus
- God knows Chinese?

God is doing this now, he is continuing to call people to himself for his glory and their good all over the world.

He is multiplying worshipers of himself using people like you and me.

We see from Revelation 7 that God's mission is guaranteed.

It will come to pass.

And the incredible reality of this story of God's mission is that from the moment you were redeemed by Jesus you were invited into being a part of this mission.

If you are a follower of Jesus, you have been invited and called to fish for men and women.
To make disciples.

To multiply worshipers.

Distractions

But how often do we forget this story of God's mission?

How often are we distracted, we don't have time, someone else will be a part of what God is doing.

We live in such a distracting and confusing world that we forget the story of God's mission is to be our story.

God has revealed his mission to us, he has redeemed us to do, and it will be realized, but many times we don't believe this story.

Instead we believe other stories about who we are and the world we live in.

Before we finish our time together I want to identify some false stories that we tend to believe.

These are stories that distract us from the true story of God's work and mission in the world and our role in that mission.

The Political Story

The first story that can distract us is the political story.

This story tells us that voting for the right candidate in the right position is our part to play in God's mission.

It tells us that God's mechanism of mission is the ballot box.

And our duty is to vote for the right person and get as many others to vote the same way we do.

This is a very tempting story to believe.

Especially in our political climate where truth doesn't matter and whoever has the loudest microphone wins.

Now what I'm not saying is that we should not care about politics or news.

Not at all.

I read more news articles and listen to more news podcast than my wife cares to hear about.

We should be educated as to which elections are coming up, who the candidates are and what they believe.

We should be people who vote for people who will bring the most common good to our communities and country.

But this political involvement is not the mission of God.

We have to be careful not to mistake our participation in the political system as participation in God's mission.

The Moral Story

The next story that can be a distraction is the Moral Story.

This story tells us that if you are a good person in general, live a happy life, and are a nice person, you are fulfilling all God could want or expect of you.

One pastor explains how this story goes”

“A god exists who created and ordered the world and watches over all of us.

This God wants people to be good, nice, and fair to each other as it taught in the Bible and in many other religions.

The central Goal of life is to be happy and feel good about oneself.

God does not need to be particularly involved in one’s life, except when God is needed to resolve a problem in life.

In the end, good people go to heaven when they die.”²

What is terrifying about this story, is that I have met many a people who believe and live in this story.

² Dean Insera, Unsaved Christian.

Many of them think they are some type of Christian. They are religious in some ways.

They think this story is what God has and wants for them.

But this story trades God’s mission for morality.

And it gets God wrong.

If we get God wrong, we get living in His world wrong.

This story distracts not only from God’s mission but also his salvation.

In Christ, God wants to be with you, change you, and send you on mission with Him.

Being a morally good person is to sell God so short in all he wants for you.

Bible Belt Story

Lastly, the Bible Belt story can be a distraction for us as well.

This is the story of cultural Christianity.

This story affects those mostly in the Bible belt, where it seems impossible to not be a Christian because of how infused the culture is with Christianity.

It is a story that tells us we were born a Christian.

A story that tells us because of where we live, went to school, or work we are Christians.

A story that tells us because of who our parents and grandparents are we are a Christian.

A story that says because I recited the Lord's prayer at baseball practice each week and walked the aisle I am Christian.

This is also the story of so many country songs about Christianity and the south.

Craig Morgan tell us about what he likes about Sundays.

"That's what I love about Sunday
Sing along as the choir sways
Every verse of Amazing Grace

An' then we shake the Preacher's hand
Go home, into your blue jeans
Have some chicken an' some baked beans
Pick a back yard football team
Not do much of anything
That's what I love about Sunday"

Maren Morris tells us about her church

"Can I get a hallelujah
Can I get an amen
Feels like the Holy Ghost running through ya
When I play the highway FM
I find my soul revival
Singing every single verse
Yeah I guess that's my church"

Hardy tells us about heaven

"I hope you hit those gold streets on two wheels
I hope your mansion in the sky's got a ten acre field
With some mud and some hubs you can lock in
Make some thunder, make 'em wonder how you got in
Hide your beer, hide your clear from the man upstairs
Crank it loud, hold it down 'til I get there

And when I do, I hope you got some new stories to tell

'Til then, give Heaven some hell”

Now listen, I am a lover of country music.

I can sing the lyrics of almost every 90 country song released.

If not all the verses definitely the choruses.

But what we see here is the perpetuation of this story that says you are a Christian, you are a good person, you are going to heaven

...because of the place you were born

...the family you had

...and the values you were taught.

Now there are two dangerous effects of this story.

First, for those who live in this story who think they are actual followers of Jesus.

This story does not present a biblical understanding of following Jesus whatsoever.

This is a story of Jesus as a savior but not a Lord.

This is a story of following Jesus with no discipleship.

This is not a story supported by scripture.

Secondly, for those of us who are truly followers of Jesus, we can believe this story and simply think everyone around us is saved.

Well this is the Bible Belt, God's mission is done here.

There is no one for me to share with.

Listen to what one pastor says about this idea.

“In the Bible belt, identifying as a Christian is a way of life, but sadly, believing the gospel and following Jesus are often not. The disconnect is real, but the Christian affiliation is stronger in the Bible Belt than in other expressions of Cultural Christianity, which provides an incredible opportunity for the church in the South to break through and make the gospel

known to a region that is saturated with access to the gospel but not true understanding of the gospel.”³

So whether you are living in this story or being kept from God’s mission because of it

Seek to be captivated by the true story of the good news of Jesus and the call to be a part of the mission of God in the world.

As we close this morning, I want to remind you of that “whose you’re one” initiative we began a while back.

That call to find just one person who is far from God but close to you is not a call for a season.

That is a call for a lifetime.

That is a call from God to be a part of his mission.

That is a call to multiply worshipers.

Because God has revealed his mission, he has redeemed us to be a part of his mission, and one day we will get to see his mission realized.

So be diligent to always have at least one person you are seeking to bring to the table of God’s grace in Christ.

Lets pray.

³ Dean Inserra, *Unsaved Christian*, 169.

