

Last week, Cooper preached on Exod 19. I want to circle back and focus on the key verses in that chapter. Those we just read. The people of God, from the beginning, were called to be a KoP / In just two weeks, our church is going to two services not for the first time but for the first time in over a decade, and the main reason is due to the missional nature of the church. Why would we make this difficult change? All change is difficult. No one likes it. The temptation is to complain, grumble, and criticize. So why would we do it then? The mission compels us. Because the nature of the church is missional. The people of God exist because of and for the mission of God. Missional by nature. Adjective form of mission. This is why we exist. The primary purpose of the people of God is proclamation. To keep being faithful to the mission Jesus gave us, we have to have room in here. Let me show you by walking through the storyline of Scripture.

Gen 1: our Creator was completely happy and self-sufficient in the fellowship of the Trinity, but out of sheer love he created the world so that he might redeem a people who would dwell with him for all eternity on the new earth. Creation was the beginning of that mission and the new creation will be the consummation of his mission.

God has a mission to fill the world with his glory. To do so, he created humanity in his image and commissioned them *to multiply, fill the earth, and rule the world* on his behalf as his royal representatives. It was a global mission from the beginning. God placed Adam and Eve on earth as priest-kings and called them to have godly children and expand the boundaries of the Garden-Temple until the glory of the Lord covered the earth as the waters cover the sea. Tragically, they preferred their own rule to God's and as a result the curse penetrated the cosmos.

However, God, being full of mercy and grace, doesn't give up on his people. He preserved Noah's family and sovereignly called an elderly pagan couple named Abram and Sarai out of darkness into marvelous light. God would reverse the curse brought by Adam through the blessing brought by the offspring of Abraham. With God, those without promise hold much promise.

Gen 12:1-3, 15:5-6 (what Adam was commanded: be fruitful and multiply – Abr is promised), **18:18**. In short, God promises to bless Abram and his family and bless the world *through* him. Abraham would be the recipient of blessing then the mediator of blessing: *blessed in order to be a blessing*. The focus was outward and others-centered from the beginning. The very purpose of the family of Abraham's existence was to bless the nations! The primary purpose of the people of God is proclamation.

Following the storyline of Scripture, the family of Abraham grows and ends up in slavery in Egypt. But God had made a promise. He redeemed his people from slavery in Egypt and made them into a great nation, just like he said he would. Before giving them the Law, we read: **Exod 19:4-6**.

The redeemed nation as a whole was to be a royal priesthood. What do priests do? They serve as mediators between the outside world and the One True Creator. They mediate the blessing of God to others. God is continuing the project that he began with Abraham. Just like in Genesis 12, the purpose of the people of God is to bless the world. Israel is blessed in order to be a blessing. The whole nation is to continue God's global project, begun with Adam and Eve and the call to fill the world with his glory, and then expanded to Abraham to bless the world. The people of God are to be mediators of blessing.

Listen to the Psalmist: “May God be gracious to us and bless us and make his face to shine upon us, that your way may be known on earth, your saving power among all nations. [notice that Abr order: blessed in order to be a blessing]. Let the peoples praise you, O God; let all the peoples praise you! Let the nations be glad and sing for joy, for you judge the peoples with equity and guide the nations upon earth”

Israel was called to be a light to the nations, drawing them in by their worship and wisdom as they obeyed God. However, like Adam in the garden, Israel preferred their own rule to God’s rule. They were not a light to the nations. Rather, they became *like* the nations. Self-focused idolaters. Jonah is the embodiment of the nation as a whole: blessed in order to hoard my blessing rather than be a means to bless the pagan nations.

They were unfaithful, but God is faithful. He will keep his promise. The prophets spoke of a future day when God would return to his people to judge, purify, and save. Isaiah chapters 40 and following are particularly thick with promise. The church fathers called this section of Isaiah the “fifth gospel” since the New Testament writers quote from it so much. Those chapters paint a picture of God returning to restore his people through the Servant-King. This is what Jesus meant when he spoke of the kingdom of God.

Isa 49:3-6 - Interestingly, here the servant is not an individual, but Israel. The servant Israel will restore Israel, but not only that! Isaiah says that merely restoring Israel would be too small. The One who embodies Israel - in other words, the Messiah, the Servant-King - will also make the people of God a light to the Gentiles so that his salvation may reach the ends of the earth. God has a global mission and his people are the means he will use to fulfill it. We are not called to be a holy huddle but an army of ambassadors. We are blessed in order to be a blessing. The coming of Jesus *is* God returning to restore his people and bring blessing to the nations. He comes as the light of the world - John 8:12, bringing grace to Jews and Gentiles and transforming us into the light of the world - Matt 5:14.

The Jewish leadership despised the universal message of Jesus. When Jesus pointed out a time in Scripture when God showed mercy to Gentiles, they tried to kill him (Luke 4:14-30). Sadly, they forgot the mission of God. They had become ingrown. *They tragically came to think they were elite among the nations rather than elect for the sake of the nations.* They forgot that they were blessed in order to be a blessing.

Jesus lived the life we should have lived and died the death we deserved to die. Just as he said, he was crucified in the place of sinners and raised from the dead on the third day. He was then enthroned at the right hand of God. Right before his ascension, he told his disciples: **Acts 1:8**: “But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.” The power refers to the indwelling of the Spirit which would be poured out in Acts 2 at Pentecost. This is your identity as a Christian: a witness. Friends, the primary purpose of the people of God is proclamation

We, as the Spirit-filled church, are witnesses. That is who we are and what we do. Jesus could’ve ushered in the *consummated* kingdom in his first coming. Instead, he *inaugurates* the kingdom. The

victory is won, but Jesus leaves us here between his first and second coming for the purpose of witness. We are left here to know him and make him known until he returns to bring us home. He has a global mission and the means he will use to accomplish his mission is his church. The phrase “ends of the earth” that Jesus uses in Acts 1:8 is the exact same phrase from Isaiah 49:6. This “time between the times” is the era of witness. Evangelism is one of the main reasons why we are left here on earth. Once again, the people of God have always been blessed in order to be a blessing and our primary purpose is the proclamation of the good news.

We are witnesses to the risen and reigning Christ. 2 Cor 5:20: “we are ambassadors for Christ, God making his appeal through us. We implore you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God.” We speak on his behalf. We carry his message. We are representatives of the king in a foreign land. Our homeland lies elsewhere but he has us here to be an ambassador for King Jesus. We have been reconciled and made agents of reconciliation. Incredibly, as we tell people the good news, God makes his appeal through us. What a joy! What a privilege! What a responsibility! God has entrusted this glorious message of grace to us jars of clay. Blessed in order to be a blessing.

This is our purpose, our meaning, our identity. 1 Pet 2:9: “But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own possession, that you may proclaim the excellencies of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.”

The gospel of Matthew ends with the Great Commission: **Matt 28:18-20**. The Great Commission begins with the great declaration. The risen Lord Jesus has all authority. He is the King of Kings and Lord of Lords. *Therefore*, we go make disciples. His authority is the basis for our mission. As Johannes Blauw put it, “Mission is the summons of the Lordship of Christ.”¹ Here is the fundamental calling of the Christian: to make disciples. We help people know and follow Jesus. The vision statement of South Side Baptist Church is “SSBC exists to help move people from wherever they are to where King Jesus wants them: submitting every aspect of their hearts and lives to his gracious Lordship.”

“Make disciples” is the main verb of the commission. “Go,” “baptize,” and “teach” are participles that modify the main command to make disciples. We share the gospel, see people saved, then help them grow in Christ-likeness. A part of the call is to teach them all that Jesus commanded. Jesus commanded his disciples to make disciples. Therefore, a disciple is by definition one who makes disciples who makes disciples who makes disciples.

Tony Payne says, “The very nature of the disciple-making task means that it generates not only new disciples, but new disciple-makers. New disciples were to be taught to obey everything that the Lord Jesus Christ commanded. And it is hard to imagine a more significant or important command of Jesus than this one – his parting charge to his disciples to make disciples of all nations. New disciples fall under exactly the same obligation as the original eleven disciples – they are to obey Jesus’ command to

¹ Johannes Blauw, *The Missionary Nature of the Church* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1962), 84.

get on with the job of making disciples, by announcing the gospel of his lordship to all nations and seeing people grow to maturity as servants of the Lord Jesus Christ.”²

That’s the plan. That’s God’s will for every Christian. Bring them in, build them up, send them out. He’s given us the power. Jesus is with us through His Spirit. Therefore, all authority goes with us as we go to the ends of the earth until the end of the age. We have the power of Jesus, the plan of Jesus, the presence of Jesus who is with us as we fulfill our primary purpose of proclaiming the gospel.

Our *mission* statement is “All of Life for Christ.” That’s for us and for others. We want to live all of life for Christ and we want all people to live all of life for Christ. Another way of saying that is: “Make every effort to move as many as possible to live all of life for Christ.” We want to make mature disciples of as many as we can. We want more and more people submitting to the King and living for his glory. Life is short, eternity is long, hell is hot and Christ is King.

The people of God have always existed for the sake of others. Blessed in order to be a blessing. We *get* to join God on his mission. It is not that the church of God has a mission. No, the mission of God has a church. The church is a missionary church or it is a false church. In other words, we are a *sent* people. In John 20:21, Jesus said, “Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.” We are sent on mission for King Jesus as his ambassadorial witnesses.

Every Christian is sent. Charles Spurgeon said, “If Jesus is precious to you (as he is to the Spirit), you will not be able to keep your good news to yourself; you will be whispering it into your child’s ear; you will be telling it to your husband; you will be earnestly imparting it to your friend; without the charms of eloquence you will be more than eloquent; your heart will speak, and your eyes will flash as you talk of his sweet love . . . It cannot be that there is a high appreciation of Jesus and a totally silent tongue about him . . . If you really know Christ, you are like one that has found honey; you will call others to taste of its sweetness; you are like the beggar who has discovered an endless supply of food; you must go tell the hungry crowd that you have found Jesus, and you are anxious that they should find him too . . . Every Christian is either a missionary or an impostor. You either try to spread the kingdom of Christ, or else you do not love him at all.”³ Every believer is an informal missionary.

Saint, you are sent. God has placed you around particular people, at particular places, in particular positions for a particular purpose: his purpose. To be on mission for him. Redeem your rhythms! Acts 17:26 says God has marked our particular time and place. Wherever you are,

you are sent there to participate in the mission of God. Where do you live, learn, work, play? Find one, to be praying for, and to share the gospel with. This is the point, the main thing, the primary purpose.

Rev 5:6-10 From every nation for every nation. Jesus died to make a PK. To be an informal missionary. Why? Because he is worthy. **5:12**. Let’s get after it.

² The Thing Is,” 94-95

³ Charles Spurgeon, “A Sermon and a Reminiscence,” from *Sword and Trowel* (March 1973). http://www.spurgeon.org/s_and_t/srmn1873.htm (accessed 8/26/2023).