

“Getting to Know COTR: What is the mission of COTR?”

(October 17, 2018)

By the work of Jesus (in His life, death, resurrection, and ascension) the Kingdom of God has been established in the earth and Jesus has been made the King of kings and Lord of lords, ruling over all nations and peoples to the end that all nations become His disciples (Matt. 28:18-20). This will be accomplished by the power and grace of God as He works through the Church of the Lord Jesus Christ. This means that the Church is the most important institution in history. Rich Lusk says:

“The church is the center of the world, the nursery of Christ’s kingdom. It is the most important institution on earth. With the church and through the church, societies live and die, rise and fall. What London is to England, Tokyo to Japan, and Paris to France, the church is to the world – only more so. . . The church is God’s eschatological beachhead in the cosmic war against evil, for only here, through her ordained means of grace in the liturgy, is the Spirit at work to turn back the forces of sin and death that otherwise hold men, women, and children captive.”

The Church is the body of Christ and as such is the “fullness of Him that fills all in all” (Eph. 1:23). The Church is the Bride of Christ and thus, is “one flesh” with Him (Eph. 5:30-32). Thus, everything that belongs to Jesus, belongs to us as His Bride and Body. We share His life. We partake of His Spirit. We are the recipients of the Father’s grace/favor and love that is His. We share His inheritance and His riches. We reign with Him. We have His authority to act and speak in His name. We are assured of the same destiny. Jesus is the Head – and since the Head is inseparable from the body – the only way we could ever perish or fail in our mission is if the head died. As long as the head lives, the body is safe and secure.

Because we are united to Christ, we are His instruments, the means by which He continues His work in the world. As we follow Him, speaking His Word, doing His will, the nations will be disciplined – in fulfillment of the Great Commission.

The Great Commission will be fulfilled because Jesus has been given all authority in heaven and upon earth – and He has promised never to leave or forsake us. Because we are in Him, we share His authority over all the principalities and powers. All things have been put under His feet (Eph. 1:22), and because we are united with Him and reign with Him, all things have been placed under our feet as well (Eph. 2:6).

Thus, the same promise the Father gave to the Son is, in turn, given to the Church (Psa. 2:8-9; Rev. 2:26-27). The Church is now the hope of the world because it is the body of Christ, the source of all salvation and life.

The kingdom of God is God’s way of re-ordering all of humanity under the Lordship of Christ Jesus and the Church is the place where this Kingdom life is lived out. In the Church, the world is to see what “eternal life” looks like. And, as we do this, we are used by God to disciple the nations. This is the mission of the Church and we carry out this mission by following Jesus in His three-fold calling of priest, king, and prophet. In Him, we have been made priests, kings, and prophets. These titles describe both the work of Jesus and the work of His people.

Biblically, “priests” are those who focus upon the worship of God. They served in God’s presence and helped men draw near to God in an acceptable way.

“Kings” rule and have authority, but they rule by serving the people. They were to be faithful shepherds, protecting and providing for the people. Their authority was always to be exercised in justice and mercy.

“Prophets” were God’s chief “counsellors,” offering mature, wise counsel to the world and in their prayers, to God Himself (acting as the King’s “friends”). Prophets “counsel” men by declaring to them the will of God.

Jesus fulfilled all these offices during His earthly life. As the great Priest, Jesus offered Himself as the one, perfect sacrifice in our behalf, paying the penalty for our sins and opening the way for us to be reconciled with the Father and have access to Him at all times.

As the great King, He is the Good Shepherd, who laid down His life for His sheep. He rules and defends us from all His and our enemies.

And as the great Prophet, Jesus makes continual intercession for us in the presence of God and declares the Word and wisdom of God to us.

Because the life of Jesus not only reveals the true character of God, but also the true character of human life, and since we are united to Him and are called to be conformed to His image, we too are called to live as priests, kings, and prophets, following His example. Thus, the mission of the church is fulfilled as we carry out this three-fold calling.

Our Priestly Calling

The focus of the priest was worship and as priests, the Church is to lead the world and assist the world in approaching God and offering Him praise and honor. What are we to do as a Church to fulfill this priestly calling?

1. Seek to have services of worship that conform to the biblical instructions regarding the worship of God.
2. Teach what the Bible says about worship so that everyone can participate fully and self-consciously, and receive the full benefits of the gifts God gives us in the service.
3. Teach the blessings and benefits that flow from worshipping according to the biblical pattern. Worship orients us properly and equips us to serve in the world.
 - Worship lays the foundation for fellowship.
 - Worship teaches us the importance of Christian education.
 - Worship reminds us of the importance of showing mercy.
 - Worship reminds us of the importance of bringing others to a knowledge of Christ. Worship is the fountain from which kingdom life flows.
4. We want to continue to strengthen other pastors and assist in the training of young men desiring to become pastors.
5. We want to encourage individuals and families to incorporate worship in their homes and daily lives.

Our Kingly Calling

In the scriptures, God requires kings to be faithful men, men who do not love power, wealth, or practice immorality (Deut. 17:14-20). God's king was to be a "brother" – one who feared the Lord and followed His Word. Thus,

- He was not to rely upon power and military might (multiplying horses) for oppression and tyranny. Rather, he was to use his power to shepherd and protect his people.
- He was not to be dominated by lust (multiplying wives). Rather, he was to be passionate for the well-being of the kingdom, caring for his people.
- He was not to use his position to enrich himself (multiplying gold and silver). Rather, he was to seek to enrich others.

The job of the King is to serve others like Jesus, the King of kings does. The "royal" or Kingly law is to love your neighbor as yourself (James 2:8). The calling of the Church is to reflect the Kingship of Jesus. How are we to fulfill this kingly calling?

1. Maintain a culture that is "worship-centered." We desire to be a church known for its faithfulness rather than its activities or programs.
2. Provide faithful oversight and encouragement to the members of the congregation through our parish system.
3. Provide opportunities for people to learn to view and exercise their various callings biblically.
4. Build a culture of increasing love and compassion for one another and the world.
5. Continue our commitment to glorify the environment of our worship.

Our Prophetic Calling

In the Bible, most of the prophets focused upon teaching the word of the Lord and calling the people to repentance and renewed faithfulness – rather than revealing future events. As prophets, acted as the "friends" of God – like the king's friends/counsellors in the ancient world. As God's "friends" they were to pray for the people, making requests in their behalf in God's presence (Gen. 20:7; Job 42:8). And as "friends" were privileged to act as God's "counsellors" (Gen. 18:22-33; Exo. 32:11-14).

The prophetic calling of the church is largely directed towards the larger world outside the church. The Spirit leads us to petition the Father and the Son to change the world and then to declare the judgments of God that will bring about this change. How can we carry out this prophetic calling?

1. Include intercessory prayer for the world as a regular part of our corporate prayer in our worship each Sunday.
2. Provide instruction and resources on prayer to train and assist us in the practice of prayer.

3. Continue to instruct our members in a biblical perspective on the family, culture, entertainment, politics, marriage, justice, economics, etc.
4. Support Christian education with our funds, prayers, and encouragement.
5. Equip members to be able to provide biblical, wise, and distinctively Christian advice and counsel when appropriate to colleagues, neighbors, and to those in authority at work and in local, regional, and national governments.
6. To seek ways in which we might communicate the truth of the Gospel and the wisdom of the scriptures to leaders in our communities – local, city-wide, and national.

In summary:

We are to be a church *in* the world, set apart *from* the world, standing *against* the evil of the world, and doing this *for* the well-being of the world. We are to embody God's redeeming love and renewing presence as members of the body of Christ to the midst of the fallen world order. God's ministry to us through Christ involves both word and deed, and so our ministry to the world must do the same.

Our mission includes evangelism – i.e. the triumphant proclamation that Jesus is Lord. But evangelism is not the full extent of our mission. We are to extend God's work in the world by showing hospitality to those around us, especially to strangers:

- by performing mercy ministry,
- engaging in church planting
- supporting missionaries in domestic and international fields;
- working for true justice through prayer, service, and through political involvement when need and opportunity arise.

And all of this must be anchored in joyful, zealous, biblical worship of the Triune God week by week.

Our vision is future-oriented. We stand in the *Reformed* tradition in that we are committed to “always reforming” – continually being molded and shaped by the Word of God (Rom. 12:1-2). We can never be satisfied with past attainments. Our mission is one that will not be completed “till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ” (Eph. 4:13).

So, we plan and build not just for the next year, or five years, or fifty years, but for centuries to come because we know “the Lord our God is the faithful God, who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations” (Dt. 7:9). Our vision is long-term. It ultimately concerns not just worship and ministry in the present, but re-creation of the entire world through the gospel of Jesus Christ.

We seek nothing less than the reestablishment of a thoroughly Christian civilization, the rebirth of Christendom in all its glory, where the world is filled with the glory of the Lord and Jesus' lordship over every cubic inch of creation and every split second of time is acknowledged with joy by every people, tongue, tribe, and nation.