

The Mission of God and the Life of Our Church

VI. The Mission of God

Psalm 87

1. Introduction and Review: Principles of Reformed Missions and Evangelism
 - 1.1. “Faith Comes From Hearing”: The Centrality of Preaching (Romans 10:13-17)
 - 1.2. “Added to Their Number”: The Work of Church Planting (Acts 2:46-67)
 - 1.3. “Always Prepared”: Holistic, Friendship Evangelism (1 Peter 3:15)
2. The Story, Once More: Psalm 87
 - 2.1. In Psalm 87, Israel sang of God’s promise to Abraham.

“...in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed.” (Gen 12:3)
 - 2.2. In Psalm 87, Israel sang of the New Testament church of Jesus Christ.

“Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old self with its practices 10 and have put on the new self, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. 11 Here there is not Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave, free; but Christ is all, and in all.” (Col 3:9-11)
 - 2.3. In Psalm 87, Israel sang of the promised new creation.

“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!’” (Rev 7:9-10)
3. The Vision: Our Church Discipling the Nations
 - 3.1. Supporting the gospel-announcing work of ordained ministers – through our prayers, our finances, our time and effort, our love and loyalty. (Romans 10:13-17)
 - 3.1.1. Being a place where the Gospel is publicly proclaimed each Lord’s Day.
 - 3.1.2. Supporting struggling congregations and church plants in our own nation.
 - 3.1.3. Supporting missionaries who are preaching the gospel and planting churches in foreign lands.
 - 3.2. Viewing, speaking of, and interacting with the world in the light of the story of God’s mission (and not, first of all, America’s story or our family’s story). This is important for our view of: foreign nations, false religions, other races. (Psalm 87, Revelation 5:9-10)
 - 3.2.1. Learning, loving, celebrating, singing of, talking about, being shaped by, being loyal to – the story of God’s mission.
 - 3.2.2. Remembering Psalm 87 and Revelation 5 when we watch the news.
 - 3.2.3. When seeing others who are different – the stranger, the sojourner, the alien – reacting in a way that is consistent with God’s mission: thinking, feeling, loving that they are the reason we are here in the world, that they show us the future that God has in store *for his church*.

- 3.3. Seeking to be holy – different, distinct, set apart – in all of life, and doing so for the sake of our witness as the light of the world. (Matthew 5:13-16)
- 3.4. Discipling the baptized disciples of Jesus already in our midst, teaching them to obey *all* that he has commanded us. (Matthew 28:18-20)
 - 3.4.1. Faithfully catechizing and discipling our children, wherein “our” refers, not to biological children first of all, but to the covenant children of our congregation. (Deuteronomy 6:7)
 - 3.4.2. Showing hospitality to and developing relationships with the young Christians, new Christians, and immature Christians in our midst, remembering that each of us has something to offer and something to learn from others in the congregation. (Romans 12:13, 1 Timothy 5:10, 1 Peter 4:9)
 - 3.4.3. Being a radically inter-generational community, refusing to be divided along the same lines as the world. (Titus 2:1-8, Colossians 3:11)
- 3.5. Serving those who are in need – the lonely, the sick, the destitute – both within and without the household of God. (Acts 2:42-47)
- 3.6. Being known to the world as a feasting, joyful, celebratory community. (Acts 2:42-47)
 - 3.6.1. Letting the bread and wine of the sacrament each Lord’s Day shape our way of life throughout the week.
 - 3.6.2. Feasting *together* on the Lord’s Day. Being a festive, joyful, celebratory community at every other opportunity. Being together. A lot. And not just with people who are like us.
 - 3.6.3. Living *together* in such a way that the world around us would conclude: the only way to explain your community is that the gospel you announce must really be true.
- 3.7. Being prepared to give a reason for the hope that is in and among us. (Matthew 5:16, 1 Peter 3:15, Colossians 4:6)
 - 3.7.1. Developing relationships with unbelievers or immature Christians – neighbors, co-workers, classmates – with the desire to *be* a witness in how we live.
 - 3.7.2. Letting others see the different-ness, the distinctness, the weirdness, the radical other-worldliness and heavenly character of how we live – as individuals, as families, as a church community.
 - 3.7.3. Being able and eager to explain – especially when asked – the good news of the resurrection of Jesus the Messiah, of forgiveness and grace, of a promised new creation, of new life *now* in the church.
 - 3.7.4. Inviting others to be part of the covenant people of God by faith in his resurrected Messiah, in the good news that God’s mission, inaugurated thousands of years ago, has been fulfilled in Jesus and is headed toward a glorious future.
- 3.8. Being willing to welcome, live with, love, and serve disciples from every tribe and tongue and nation; in other words: being willing to welcome and love those who are *not like you*, who do not share your tastes and interests, who are not mature where you are mature, who need to grow and be disciplined, who probably have a lot to teach you as well. (1 Corinthians 12:12-27)
- 3.9. Doing all of this, not in our own strength, but as the gracious fruit of the gospel, striving to live as the light of the world only because we first *are* the light of the world in union with Christ.