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Dear Readers,

What follows is one man's weekly attempt to know the truth of God's Word and bring it to His people for their good and ultimately for His glory. Please regard these only as notes belonging to a busy pastor uploaded as they stand (for better or for worse, complete or incomplete, almost always with grammatical errors, and always with room for refinement in content, structure, presentation...) to support the ongoing study of God's Word. I firmly believe that the community of faith which is the body of Christ can and should bring their gifts to bear for the good of the rest of the body and that any one teacher can be taught by the others with an understanding of the truth. Therefore, should you have insight that would sharpen any of the thinking expressed here, know that I would be pleased to receive it. Clearly, the input that is most welcome and most helpful is that which is more concise than verbose, Biblically grounded and expressed with the goal of displacing misunderstanding and apprehending the truth of God's Word. Your thoughts of that nature are most welcome, certainly appreciated and will be thoughtfully considered. You are invited to send those insights to me at johnny@stoneharborchurch.org.

In pursuit of truth and growing a shepherd's heart,

Johnny

Transformation Card

This page provides an overview of the message and resources for individual and group study.

Date: July 25th, 2010
Series: The Church of God's Intention
Part: Part 2 – What God Intends the Church to Do
Section: Mission
Topic: Mission
Message Title: **God Intends the Church to Join Him in His Mission - 1**
Outline Title: "This requires that we..."
Short Title: To Nurture We Must...
Text: Various
Key Words: Mission, Witness

Message Outline

God Intends the Church to Join Him on His Mission

This Requires that We...

1. **Listen** to God's Call to **Mission**
2. **Understand** God's Call to **Mission**
3. **Embrace** God's Call to **Mission**

Related Scripture

1. Gen 1
2. John 15
3. Acts 1
4. Acts 2
5. 2 Cor 5

Questions for Thought and Discussion

1. What Scriptures call us to mission?
2. Who is the cast in the drama of mission?
3. What is God's purpose in His mission?
4. How is God accomplishing His mission?
5. To date, what has been your involvement in God's mission?
6. Having freshly considered God's call to mission, how do you think God would have you involved in His mission?
7. How can you let God's call to mission become God's call **upon you** to mission?

Memory and Meditation Verse

"...you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth." Acts 1:8 (NASB)

C. God Intends the Church to Join Him in His Mission

Having spent many weeks looking to the Scriptures to understand what God intends the church to BE we have of late turned to the investigation of what God intends the church to DO. We have seen that He intends the church to worship Him and to nurture each other.

Now we ask, what is God's call upon His church in regards to those outside the church? What does God intend His church to do in regards to the world? Are we to feed the starving, shelter the homeless and defend the powerless? Are we to champion the causes of social justice seeking liberation for the oppressed? Are we to pass out gospel tracks and lead people to accept Jesus as their savior? Are we to invite the unsaved to church on Sunday so the pastor can preach the gospel, give an altar call, lead them to Christ in the sinners-prayer and assure them that they are saved?

These may all be perfectly valid activities of the church but none of them individually or even all of them collectively hit the mark of God's intention regarding our efforts for the world outside of the church. Every best crack at what we think our mission should be will miss the mark unless we let God lead us from His Scriptures as to what His purposes. We don't want to be the runners in a race, even very fast runners, who don't know the course, the rules or the whereabouts of the finish line. Our Christian lives are not just about running fast in any old direction, they are about running the race God has called out for us.

What is God's purpose for the world (the non-church)? What are the means He has specified towards that end?

If our objective is to do what God intends us to do for the world outside of the church, we will be well served to listen to God's call to action, understand what His goals are and how He would have us be involved. If we embrace His call to mission properly understood, then we are off and running in the right direction and can throw ourselves into the task with all expectation that such effort has eternal value in the eyes of God.

I first titled this section: God intends the Church to Carry Out His Mission. I have re-titled it "God Intends the Church to Join Him on His Mission" because the former phrasing displays an underlying misconception of our mission – the thought that independently from God we can execute the task He has given us to do. Hopefully the title as it stands conveys the more accurate conception that our mission is really to be about His mission in clear submission to Him and in clear dependence on His power.

Edmund Clowney says, "Mission is God's action. In commissioning his church, Christ gave assurance of his presence and power. We go where the Lord is already at work." P. 177

If we are to be the church of God's intention, if we are to be on mission as He intends, if we are to reach toward the world according to His wisdom we must...

4. Listen to God's Call to Mission

God's call to mission comes less from one or two succinct verses and more out of the story of God's dealing with man in general. Allow me to read you some passages of Scripture and attempt to refresh the larger story. See if you might not hear (in the Scripture and my explanations regarding them) God's call to mission, i.e., God call to you as to what you are to do regarding the world outside of the church.

a) It is first heard "in the beginning"

In God's design of creation and how it is to be administered

(6) In God as Creator, King & Father

(a) Gen 1:1-2

(7) In Mankind as Created, Vice-Regent & Son

(a) Gen 1:26-28

(b) Gen 2:7

We see here that God's intentions for mankind included His intentions for Him to "rule over" the rest of creation. And we have seen that we were to "rule over" as God's image bearers and those whose very life has been breathed into us by the breath of God. We were to exercise "dominion in the context of communion" – dominion over God's creation in the context of communion with God.

Mankind (uniquely capable of knowing and relating to God by virtue of God's design of him in His likeness and image and by His breathing into him life) was to represent God to the rest of creation.

(8) In the Goodness of God's Abundant Provision, Peace and Rest

(a) Gen 1:31

(b) Gen 2:1-3

The call that comes from the record of the beginning is the communication of God's intention for Creation: God is shown to be King and Father ruling over his creation with and through His devoted image-son for whom He has fully provided for in the garden sanctuary where they enjoy peace and rest in each other's company.

It is the fragile beginning that pictures the durable end. Knowing God's original intention will inform our understanding of our role as those invited to be a part of His activity of restoring creation to the goodness, peace and rest of the pre-fall creation.

b) God's call to mission is then heard in the Fall

But of course we know the history -- that man did not live in harmony with God's design but yielded to Satan's temptation and suffered the consequence of estrangement from God and thus the inability to rule over creation as He had originally intended (Gen 3)

(6) God's Promise to Reverse the Curse

(a) Gen 3:15

God's mission is to restore creation from its fallen state to that which He intended and pictured and thereby glorify Himself.

In Gen 3:15 God promises to do just that by the destruction of the one who turned the world upside down with his temptation of Adam and Eve to evil in rebellion against God.

God's mission would have something to do with setting creation right-side-up by delivering a fatal blow to the one who upset it in the first place.

c) God's call to mission is set in the context of two distinct groups of people

The human discontinuity with God resulting from the fall led to **division** and **discord** amongst men first seen here in God's curse upon the serpent in Gen 3:15 where **two lines of humanity** are introduced; the first under the classification of the seed of the woman and the second referred to as seed of the serpent.

This two fold division of humanity became more clear in the conflict between Cain who murdered His right-worshiping brother Able (Gen 4), and then even more so in the days of righteous Noah who stood in such stark contrast to the world of men of his day who were so completely estranged from God that the Scripture says of the man of that day, "... every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Gen 6:5).

God's call to mission will be a call for the one group to witness to the other.

d) God's call to mission is then heard in God's redemptive activity

God first delivers His people (the POG) from His fair judgment upon all mankind by His provision but then asks of them that they represent Him (ruling on His behalf) not only to the rest of non-human creation but to the rest of humanity as well.

Having themselves been the targets of God's loving and redemptive activity the POG then find themselves God's instruments of that same activity to the rest of the world.

We see this in all the major characters of God's redemptive history.

- God regarded Seth not Cain in this favored way.
- And so it was with Noah alone of all the rest of the people of his day.
- The same dichotomy is seen in Noah's son Shem and not his brothers Ham and Japheth.
- Then God worked with Shem's descendent Abraham calling him out of the pagan culture of his birth into a relationship with Him.

Abraham received the promise of God in Gen 12:1-3 that provides the clear statement of God's mission. Read Gen 12:1-3.

God was to bless Abram/Abraham and then others through Him. What was that blessing? That blessing finds its greatest **depth** in the presence with and the knowledge of God, i.e., in the restored relationship between God the Father and His redeemed sons. That blessing finds its greatest **breadth** in the God's chosen people from the entire world. The prophets Isaiah and Habakkuk spoke of God's intention that people from all over the earth would come to know Him.

Is 11:9 -- For the ^(S)earth will be full of the knowledge of the LORD As the waters cover the sea.

Hab 2:14 -- "For the earth will be filled With the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, As the waters cover the sea.

Even within Abraham's offspring God chose to advance His mission of redemption through some and not others.

- God dealt in this special way with Isaac and not Ishmael,
- then with Jacob and not Esau. God would later give Jacob the name Israel and his 12 sons would form the foundation of the nation that bears that name.

Not only was Israel God's people in some general and undefined way, but in particular they were to be collectively His son and individually His sons. This can be seen in God's early instruction to Moses in Ex 4:22, "Then you shall say to Pharaoh, 'Thus says the LORD, Israel is My son, My firstborn.'"

As God's son, Israel was to be about his Father's business -- the restoration of creation into the order of God intention.

This commonly understood obligation of a son to represent his father rested upon Israel. Israel was to represent God to rest of the world. Likewise the same obligations of a son to a father falls upon the church today calling out our mission to make God known.

Implicit to their corporate identity as the son of God, Israel was to 'mediate the knowledge of God to the world of men' (see Kit Culver, Sacred Space p. 102)

A calling at which the Bible clearly testifies they failed miserably and repeatedly. Israel experienced more failure than success at being the son of God. But their failure proved God's point that only He Himself could provide the perfect Son who could make God known perfectly to the entire world.

And God did just that in the man Christ Jesus. By living amongst mankind Jesus made God known to man. Jesus revealed God as deliverer by means of His own satisfaction of His requirement for righteousness. Christ Himself, perfect in every way, laid down His life as a substitutionary sacrifice for us. As God provided the sacrifice so that Isaac would not have to perish, God Himself provided the sacrifice of His own son so that we would not have to suffer our just judgment.

Our sin separated us from God, but God's hand was not so short that it could not save (Is 59:1-2). He Himself came to us in His son Jesus Christ to be the Son of God that Israel couldn't be for all the good intentions and zeal of its people.

In **and only in** our union with Him (by God's grace through faith and His indwelling Spirit) can we be the sons of God He originally intended. In union with Christ we are God's sons and His witnesses joining Him in the activity of His mission to restore all that was lost in the Fall.

With that general biblical basis laid let's know labor to ...

5. Understand God's Call to Mission

Remember, the mission of the church is God's mission.

a) God's Goal re: Mission

(6) The Restoration of His Original Intention for Creation

b) God's Means

(6) Christ Jesus Himself

He is the True Israel the nation Israel could never be. He is the true Son Israel could never be. He is perfect sacrifice no one else could provide. He is the true covenant that does not depend on the performance of men. He is the true temple not built by human hands, He is the dwelling place of God being Himself God and man. God's righteous judgment is satisfied in Him. He Himself is the way, the truth and the life. ¹²"And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved." (Acts 4:12) God's mission finds its fulfillment in every way in the person of Jesus Christ.

Well then, what about us? If Christ Jesus is so complete in His provision for the redemption of man, then what is our role?

(7) Christ has Called the Church to Join Him on God's Mission

Redeemed by Him and in union with Him we are to be:

- “Sons in the Son” --
- The arms of His body reaching out to those God is calling to Himself
- The mouths proclaiming the gospel to the world
- Disciple makers making more disciples of His from all nations (Mat 28:18ff) laboring like Paul to see every man complete in Christ (Col 1:28-29)
- His witnesses to the remotest part of the earth (Acts 1:8ff)
- We are to be salt (Mat 5:13 & ctx) and light (Mat 5:14a)
- We are to be a city set on a hill (Mat 5:14b)
- We are to be a lamp on a lamp stand (Mat 5:15)
- We are to be “beseechers” of the Lord of the harvest to send out workers into harvesters in His plentiful harvest. (Mat 9:37-38)

Our mission is to be who He has redeemed us to be, and that is the reconciled sons of God by virtue of our union with the Son of God.

(8) What Our Mission will Require of Us**(a) Mission Happens -- as the natural result of your new life in Christ as redeemed sons of God**

Do not be overwhelmed by a whole new obligation of mission. Oh pastor, you are telling me not only do I have to live a life of worship towards God and lay my life down for the people of the church but I also have to reach out to the world outside the church? Where am I going to find the time? I can barely keep food on the table and a roof over my head.

Fortunately our mission is less of a new activity we have to add to our busy schedules and more the life of faith and love lived out in the normal course of our existing life in Christ.

It will happen without forcing it to happen as the consequence of three already existing realities of every Christian's life.

1. The first reality is that you are alive in Christ by the power of His indwelling Spirit.
2. The second reality is the presences of millions (billions?) of people who are dead to the true life God has for His people. These still live in the darkness of separation from God – people who do NOT know Him and that His goal is restoring the fallen world to the perfection of His design.
3. The third reality is that you have not yet died your physical death so you are living and doing business with and recreating with the walking dead. Your paths cross almost every day of the week.

Your mission to the world can come naturally because you have been given a new nature. You are a new creation in Christ, you have been born again, you have the Spirit of God living in you such that if you simply live out that reality then you are a living testimony to the living God. When people do business with you and they are having an encounter with a spiritual being. When people recreate with you and they are having a spiritual experience. When you share a cup of coffee with an unbeliever it can become an encounter with the Spirit of God in you.

Why do we chuckle at this? I have a hunch it is because we are more accustomed to living and walking by sight and not by faith; it is because we have been redeemed but we are still living at least from time to time as if we have not.

Perhaps the most helpful way to improve our mission effectiveness to the world outside the church is to foster our life of devotion to God within the church. Our nurture will bolster our mission.

I have a hunch that if we grow in our relational knowledge of God, the natural by-product will be a heart of love and compassion rich in personal knowledge that can't help but share the hope of Christ with the lost.

Somehow busy Jesus had time for the sick, the children and the lost of the world. I see no reason why, as we are transformed more fully into the image of the Son of God and we become more Christ-like ourselves, we would not, like Christ, in the normal course of our lives have abundant opportunity to testify of God with the people He brings to us.

How much better a goal to witness to the world out of our personal knowledge of God and the active understanding that we are 'sons of God' rather than out of our successful completion of a course on personal evangelism? How much better to know God so well ourselves that we can tell others about Him by our words as easily as we can tell others about those we know best?

How much better to live our Christ-like lives in front of people as a demonstration of the reality of Christ?

What is the danger here? We can kid ourselves and get so sold on this organic model of mission that we spin laziness and selfishness as "just letting mission happen man, its all good."

(b) Mission Requires our Love in Action

Mission comes naturally but not easily, not effortlessly. Jesus' difficult intentional work on the cross won't permit us to spin selfishness and ease as organic mission for long.

Let's read Luke 15.

Both Keller and Clowney point out that Jesus meant His audience to think the older brother should have gone out after his younger brother. The shepherd leaves the 99 to go after the one lost sheep. The coin holder goes after the one lost coin. But the older brother did NOT go after his younger brother. Instead he disdained him and judged himself righteous and the one who had unjustly been denied of his share of the family wealth. The older brother in Jesus parable was supposed to be identified with the Jewish Pharisees of Jesus' day who knew the Scriptures but did not know the God of whom they spoke. They understood human adherence to legal stipulations but they missed the heart of the law which should have lead them to Christ. They were sons of God, Israel, in name only but they did not serve God as His sons or they would have received His Son Jesus as their Savior not as the threat that needed to be killed so He wouldn't upset their valued high position in the Israelite community.

The older brother should have gone after the younger. Look how God valued his younger son and celebrated his return. It is one of the dearest scenes in the Scriptures and it gives me great hope that we have a heavenly Father that loves us like this. The older brother should have gone. Clearly the way the parables are told, Jesus would have gone.

We would be missing an unstated but clear meaning of these parables that Jesus would have us go to the lost with the message of God's redemption for them in Christ.

So our witness can come as naturally as apples from an apple tree but if we are truly transformed into Christ-likeness then we will find our Christ-likeness manifests itself in sacrificial love that intentionally seeks that which is lost.

6. Embrace God's Call to Mission

I'd like to redefine a term. It is the term seeker church. I'm thinking that Jesus would have us be a seeker church. Not a church that looks so much like the world that it is considered by marketers as seeker friendly; but a church full of Christ-like seekers of the lost. Certainly Jesus was the quintessential seeker of the lost. We might do well to become like Him in this respect as well. Do you remember Jesus dealings with little rich tax collecting sinner Zaccheus in Luke 19:1-10. Jesus went out of his way to connect with

Him and bring salvation to his house. In the closing verse of this story Jesus says of Himself, "...the Son of Man has come to seek and save that which was lost."

Do you sense that Lord would have you become a seeker of the lost, and older brother who goes after the younger because He loves him and he knows how much his Father loves him.

The Lord is growing me in this area. He is placing the obligation of the church to the lost in front of me and asking me to be like Christ in my love for the lost. Will you be my adopted son on my mission with me.

I need to embrace God's call to mission more fully. With Christ as my example how could I do otherwise? I would be the older brother Pharisee. Wouldn't I? Wouldn't you for that matter? If the church is to be the church of God's intention we will embrace not push off our obligation to the world out of which God is still calling His people through faith in Christ.

- If you are a preacher preach the orthodox apostolic gospel of Jesus Christ
- If you a teacher, teach that same gospel
- If you are a living breathing walking Christian, then live, breath and walk the gospel as a testimony of to the world

Love must motivate our mission. As it is essential in our worship of God and nurture of one another so love is essential in our witness/mission to the world. Our love for God is increased by our knowledge of God. And that takes us right back to Philippians 3 pursuit of Christ.

"More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish so that I may gain Christ"

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