

Church - Proclaiming, Planting, Partnering

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[0 : 00] It's on page 1141 if you're using a church Bible. So as our focus today is on the Court Kerry project, we're just taking a break from 1 Peter.

And today we're going to think about proclaiming, planting, partnering. There's notes being handed round if you'd like to take notes. Which helps you to focus.

Just put your hand up if you want a pen as well. They're being passed around too. So Romans chapter 15 on page 1141. We're going to start at verse 14. To verse 33, we're going to look at that passage together.

So let's pray. Our Father God, we ask that through your word and by the power of your Holy Spirit, you would captivate our minds and give us understanding.

That you would captivate our hearts so that we are aligned to you and fit in with all that you are doing.

[1 : 47] And we ask that you would capture our will, our very being and all that we have. So that we might respond in service to you.

Lord, we ask for your help. For your work to be done amongst us today and amongst all the churches that we've been thinking about this morning and indeed in all the churches that are seeking to serve you across this island.

We ask for your help now, we pray. Amen. So when you think about church, what do you think the purpose of the church is?

Like, here we are, gathered together today, as we do every Sunday. What is the purpose of our existence here in Carrigline?

What are we doing here together? Are we simply here to meet as friends and hang out and have a chat over tea and coffee? Are we here to organise programmes for our kids to attend?

[3 : 06] Or maybe we're here to provide some kind of practical care for people in need. Or perhaps our vision is to be bigger and we're to send people overseas to dig wells and build houses for those who don't have it.

Now all of those things are good things to do and we should do them but they are not the primary purpose of the church. The Apostle Paul tells us in this text what his purpose is, what his ambition is.

Have a look at verse 20, chapter 15, verse 20. Here's the Apostle Paul speaking. He says, It has always been my ambition.

This is my purpose in life. This is my drive in life to preach the gospel where Christ was not known. Paul's ambition in life, his purpose is to preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to all people in all places and now he's calling on the church to support him and to partner him in that task.

[4 : 24] So look at verse 23. But now he says, there's no more places for me to work in these regions because there's already churches here. And since I've been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain.

I hope to visit you while passing through and have you assist me on my journey there after I've enjoyed your company for a while.

So we can see the purpose of the church, and it's there on the screen, is that we together would proclaim the gospel of Christ to all peoples in all places and to partner together with churches who are preaching the same gospel.

That's what we're about. That's in summary what we're about. Proclaiming the gospel of Christ to all people in all places and to partner with churches who will preach this same gospel.

So we're going to look at this under three headings this morning. Three Ps, all very easy to help us grasp and understand what it's all about. First, proclaiming the gospel of Christ.

[5 : 38] So here he is writing this letter, this big long letter, to a church in Rome that has heard the good news about Jesus. These people have come to trust in Jesus as their saviour.

They've come to experience the death of Jesus on the cross for their sins, his resurrection from the grave, giving them new life, and the impact of this gospel on their lives is obvious.

Look at verse 14. Verse 14. I myself am convinced my brothers and sisters that you yourselves, that is because of the gospel, are full of goodness.

Their love, their kindness, their goodness is evident to see. They are complete in knowledge. Their understanding of who Jesus is and what God has done is complete.

And they are competent to instruct one another. They're meeting with each other to encourage and support one another. They've experienced the gospel in such a way that it has got deep down in their lives.

[6 : 42] It has radically changed them. But here's the point. He wants them to go further. He wants them to look out beyond themselves and beyond their little church and join him in this ministry to reach all places and all peoples.

Look at verse 16. This is his plan, his desire. He says, I want to be a minister of Christ Jesus to the Gentiles with the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God.

This is a summary, if you like, of his ministry. And that is what he is calling the church to be involved in, to partner in. Look what he says, verse 16. He says we have this priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God.

The imagery here is of the Old Testament priest. You know, the Old Testament temple and the priest who was at work there and his primary job was to bring offerings, to bring thanksgiving offerings to God on behalf of the people.

Now, says Paul, that's what our role is, except for we're not going to be offering things to God.

We're not making sacrifices anymore. We are, in thanksgiving to God, going to offer people to God. [8 : 18] That's going to be our offering of thanksgiving. We will offer the priestly duty of proclaiming the gospel of God so that the Gentiles might become an offering acceptable to God.

He wants to give. He wants to offer people to God who have come to believe and trust the good news of Jesus Christ. Now, that's the greatest thing that we can ever give to God.

If we're wanting to respond to what God has done for us, if we are wanting to give a thanksgiving offering to God, the very best gift that we could give to God to say thank you to Him is to proclaim the gospel to people so that they trust in the Lord Jesus and follow Him.

But he doesn't just want to offer believers to God. Look at the end of verse 16. to offer them so that they will be acceptable to God and sanctified by the Holy Spirit.

To be sanctified by the Spirit is to be set apart for God. It's somebody who is going to be in the service of God. So we can see that not only are they believing in the gospel, but they are now beginning to proclaim the gospel to others.

[9 : 44] Verse 17. Therefore, I glory in Christ Jesus in my service to God. This is my ambition.

This is my desire. I long to proclaim the gospel so that others will join me in proclaiming the gospel to.

Now that's simply what's happening through the Court Kerry Project. It's people like you and I where we are every day in our places of work, in our school, in our neighbourhoods.

It's our churches together in partnership seeking to reach out and to bring an offering that is acceptable to God.

Shane explained how they're seeking to do that in passage. You remember on the video, he talked about the Bible studies that they're having, the events that they organise, the relationships that they have with people, whether with tidy towns or something else.

[10 : 49] Their purpose is to build up those contacts and to introduce people to Jesus, to share the good news with them. And that's simply what we are seeking to do.

Each one of us, where we are, where God has placed us in the relationships that we have, is to be those who are seeking to bring an offering, to say thank you to God for what he has done by just proclaiming and bringing that to those people.

But as we think about that, let's remember that anyone who does become a believer in Christ is God's work, not ours. If anybody's going to become a Christian, it's God who will do it.

Look at verse 18. He says, I will not venture to speak of anything except what Christ has accomplished through me.

What Christ has accomplished through me in leading the Gentiles to obey God by what I have said and done. You see, we can't make anyone a Christian.

[12:02] I can't convince anybody to turn and see that Christ is the way. Everything that Paul did in his life, in his ministry, everything he did and he said was done, verse 19, by the power of signs and miracles through the power of the Spirit.

As Paul went about his ministry, as an apostle, he did many signs and miracles. And those signs and miracles were to confirm that the gospel he preached was true, that Jesus did die on the cross, that Jesus did rise again from the dead, and that he did ascend into heaven.

These were the testimony that the gospel can be trusted and believed, that it is real. But his point is that everything through his ministry, all that he said, all that he did, was all done through the power of the Holy Spirit.

It was a work that God accomplished in people. So let's be real about this as we go about our ministry, whether it's in Passage, or Carigline, or Kinsale, or Yaw, we can't save anybody ourselves. We can't convince anyone. It is Christ working through ordinary people like us in the power of the Holy Spirit that will convince somebody that Christ is real.

[13:36] So our purpose together as churches is to proclaim the gospel of Jesus Christ. So that's the first big thing.

The second big thing is this, that we would be planting gospel churches together. You see, as Paul went about his work, he not only proclaimed the gospel, as people came to believe in Jesus, they began to meet together and form together as local churches.

Look at the middle of verse 19. So he says, from Jerusalem all the way round to Illyricum. Now, those countries today, it's like working all the way.

We've seen Syria on the news, but that's part of the work where he was, through Syria, into Turkey, then across to Greece, up to Macedonia, to Kosovo, and Albania.

all these areas, the Apostle Paul had travelled. And as he went, people came to believe in Christ and local churches were established in these places.

[14:47] We can read the book of Acts and we can see these churches being established. But he's not content with what he has done. He's looking to new areas and new places.

Look at verse 20. He says, it has always been my ambition to preach the gospel where Christ was not known so that I would not be building on someone else's foundation.

In other words, he's looking to areas to plant churches where there are no other churches. He longs to go to places and situations where there is no witness.

His ambition is that people in all places will hear the good news of Jesus. Now, this isn't just Paul's little idea that he has for himself.

This is to be the vision of the church. This is to be the vision of Carigline. This is the vision of the Cork-Cerry project. So, what would that actually look like for us here today?

[15:53] Well, have a look at this on the screen. Here's a few stats for you. Our resident statistician has already told me that it should be 4.8 million. So, you can add on another, what, half a million there to the population in Ireland.

But, think of that. All those people roughly, and these are just rough figures, 240 evangelical churches.

That is, people who hold that the word of God is true, that it's God's authority for our life and what we believe. They are people who trust in Jesus Christ for salvation.

So, there's many flavours of that, but, that's about how many churches there are and about 80 in attendance. You can do the maths how many people that add up to. Roughly speaking, around 0.5% of the population of Ireland follow, trust, and love the Lord Jesus.

That's one of the lowest in the whole of Europe. The lowest in the whole of Europe. Look at the bottom two figures there. 31 towns, well, look at the top one, 5,000.

[17:09] Passage is a town of 5,000. There's 71 other towns across Ireland like Passage. 71. 31 towns of a population of 10,000 or above.

Maybe Covering a Line kind of fits into that category with no evangelical witness. It's not that they can just travel down the road two miles to a church. Some of these can be 30 miles away from their nearest church.

You see, it's great to watch the video and see new churches planted in Yaw and in Kinsale. It's great to hear of this new work in Passage West.

We thank God for what he's done in amazing ways. Not just amongst Baptist churches, but amongst many other churches that are seeking to do the same thing.

What about the rest of Cork? I know of just one church that is seeking to reach out with the gospel of Christ in the north part of the city.

[18:16] What would it mean for people to work into that? What would it mean to pray for that to happen? And when we look at this, we can go, how on earth is that going to be achieved?

It seems impossible. How on earth will this happen? Well, look what motivates him to do this. Verse 21.

As it is written, those who were not told about him will see. Those who have not heard about Christ will understand.

Now, this is a quote that comes right out of Isaiah 52, which is a big section telling us of God's great promise of salvation that's going to go not just to God's people, Israel, but to all the nations.

Let me read you just one verse. Isaiah 52, verse 10. The Lord will lay bare his holy arm in the sight of all the nations and all the ends of the earth will see the salvation of our God.

[19:40] This is God's global plan that his salvation would go to all nations. So, in the quote here, verse 21, those who are not told about him, they will see, they will get it.

Those who have not heard, they will hear and they will understand. That's the promise. This is the motivation, the drive for Paul and for the church at Rome to keep on going because God has given this promise, not just to them, but to us also.

that as we go and proclaim the good news, as the good news is proclaimed in passage, hearts will be captivated by the beauty and the greatness of Jesus Christ, that people will come to faith and churches will be planted.

It's not us, it's God's promise power working through us people, ordinary people like you and I.

Now we might think, well, that's alright for some of the other churches, they're bigger, they're better, look at the stuff that they can do, what can we do? Look at us, look at us, rattling about in this huge big hall, what can we do?

[21:02] Together, as people who love the Lord Jesus, our resources, our gifts, God's promise, God's power, working through people like you and I, with this great promise that those who have not heard will understand.

Our purpose is that new churches will be planted. So, that's the second big thing. Proclaiming Christ, planting churches, and the last, our partnership in the gospel.

We can only do this in partnership together. As Paul travels from place to place, he's not expecting that everybody is gifted in the same ways that he is or that he has the same calling.

He's not saying that everybody will go where he's going or will do what he's doing, but he does expect partnership, that this is something that we can all do together, we all play our part in it.

We prioritize our support for church planting. So, look at verse 23. He's writing this letter to a church and this is what he's asking of them.

[22:15] He says, now there is no more places for me to work in these regions, so these areas have already got churches. We don't want to plant a church where there's already a church there. And since I've been longing for many years to see you, I plan to do so when I go to Spain.

I want to go to Spain because there's no churches in Spain. And I hope to visit you while passing through and to have you assist me on my journey there after I've enjoyed your company for a while.

So Paul's ambition, his desire, is he wants to get to Spain to bring the good news because there's no church, but if he's going to do that, he needs the partnership and the support of the church around him.

So he says in verse 24, I hope to visit you while passing through and have you, the church, assist me on my journey and in my work.

Now that word assist is a really helpful term because it's about mission support. That's what it is. It's about mission support.

[23:21] It's about providing the practical needs that Paul will need. It's about sending people who can go with him to support him in his work. It's about giving finances to make it happen, to pay for his rent, to pay for his food.

It's about equipment and resources and everything else that will be needed for Paul as he seeks to make that journey and to plant churches in that area. He knows he can't do it on his own, so he looks to the church and says, support me in what I'm seeking to do.

Now a big part of that support for him and indeed for the work that we're seeking to do through the Court Kerry project is financial. It will need money to make it happen.

People need places to live. People need to put petrol in the car. They need to eat food. They need to be able to live life to enable them to do the work that God has called them to do.

So look at verse 25. Now, however, he says, I'm on my way to Jerusalem in service of the saints there. So we're getting a bit confused here because rather than heading towards Rome to the church where he's looking for help so he can get to Spain, he's going in the other direction back to Jerusalem.

[24 : 50] So why is he going all the way back to Jerusalem first? Well, read on. Verse 26. For Macedonia and Achaia, so the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, were pleased to make a contribution for the poor among the saints in Jerusalem.

They were pleased to do it, and indeed they owe it to them. For if the Gentiles have shared in the Jews spiritual blessings, they owe it to the Jews to share with them their material blessings.

Now, this is just a big subtle hint with a big mallet on top of their heads, basically. Listen, guys, you should be doing the same.

You see the churches in Macedonia and Achaia, they're giving of their resources and their finances to help the church in Jerusalem. Now, you should be doing the same to help other areas where there are no churches.

He's reminding them, you've received the blessings of the gospel from the Jews. The gospel first came to the Jews. It went from them to the Gentiles to other people.

[26 : 01] You have salvation because of them. You've been blessed spiritually because of them. And because you've been blessed spiritually, give financially.

Now, I make no excuse for what I'm saying here. That should be exactly the same for us. The gospel has overflowed into our lives.

We are spiritually blessed. We have been given so much. We have the right to be called children of God.

We have a future inheritance that is to come that we've been looking at 1 Peter that will not perish, spoil or fade. We've got an inheritance that is ours that will be kept for us.

And guess what? Nothing that we have in the here and now we're going to bring with us to that inheritance. And because we have been blessed spiritually, we are to give financially so that other people, get to receive the spiritual blessings of the gospel.

[27 : 18] Every penny or every cent that you have, every euro that you earn is a gift from God given to you and to me to be administered for the building up of his kingdom.

It is not our money. It is a gift given to God to us so that we might release it so that the work is done so that churches are planted and people are reached.

And let me be very clear, this isn't a plea, a personal plea to fill the pastor's pockets. This is about letting that money be released so that people can go and proclaim Christ.

Those who are gifted to go and plant churches, people like Shane, people like Craig, others like them, so that they can go and do this work. Partners together in this work.

And that is what we are seeking to do. You can check out our finances, ask Nick, he's not here today, ask one of the elders. we seek to give to this work. We give to help people like Craig Maiden in Kinsale to enable him to do that work.

[28 : 41] So, we give support financially and we do it while praying for gospel work. And we just finish briefly with this, verse 30.

I urge you brothers and sisters, by the Lord Jesus Christ and by the love of the Spirit, join me in my struggle by praying to God for me. This work is a struggle.

There will be opposition, there will be persecution. It's not easy to be at work in a town like passage. It's not easy to be a Christian, as we've been looking at in 1 Peter, where you go to work and in your college and in your school.

It's hard, it's tough. And so we need the prayer support of one another. We cannot do it alone. And we must never underestimate the power of prayer.

Look at his prayer. Pray, verse 31, that I may be rescued from the unbelievers in Judea, that my service in Jerusalem may be acceptable to the saints there, so that by God's will I may come to you with joy together with you and be refreshed.

[29 : 54] You know, Paul on his journeys went to Jerusalem. When he arrived in Jerusalem, he was lynched. They were vying for his blood.

They were wanting to kill him. The only way that he actually got security and protection was when the Roman soldiers came in and arrested him and put him in prison. That was the only way he could be kept safe.

They put him on a ship that got shipwrecked and eventually he ended up in Rome under house arrest. His prayer to them at this point is saying pray that I will get to Rome and that I will be able to continue on my ministry.

God answered that prayer but he ended up in prison and he got shipwrecked but God answered the prayer. He kept him and preserved him to enable him to do what he had to do.

Don't underestimate the power of your prayers for your brothers and sisters at work in this way. That is why we are asking us to pray when we are in our home groups for this work.

[31 : 02] Pray that people's eyes would be opened up to the truth of the gospel. That their ears would be unlocked to understand who Jesus is. Pray that in the midst of the toughness and the difficulty of the work churches will be planted.

Never ever underestimate the power of prayer as we talk to God. This is the way in which we partner for each other.

And I want to encourage us as a church as we have been praying keep on praying. As you have been giving keep on giving.

As you seek to reach out and partner with the churches keep doing it more and more with the promise of God that with his power he will change lives.

so the purpose of the church proclaiming the gospel of Christ to all peoples in all places to partner with churches who will preach this same gospel to see new churches planted.

[32 : 11] Give thanks for what God has done and let us together continue to work on in all that he will do. Let's pray together. Father thank you for giving us an insight into the work that you have been doing through the centuries through people like Paul through the church in Rome.

Thank you that as we follow that story right up to now we see churches across the world following that same vision. Thank you that people have come to see and understand.

Thank you that this island in which we live has many churches and many people who love you and follow you. Thank you for the believers that are gathered here today.

Thank you for saving each one. Thank you for bringing them to Christ. Thank you for giving them the hope that they have. And we pray Father that we would take on board this wonderful promise that you would yet see your salvation go to the ends of this earth.

Not just here in Cork but beyond the boundaries to the rest of Ireland and beyond Ireland to the rest of the world. that you would accomplish your work in the power of your spirit through your people.

[33 : 46] So please encourage us today. Please Father do your work in this area. Raise people up. Call people who will do this work for your honour and for your glory.

We pray this in Jesus name. Amen.