

The Mission of God and Your Church Fully Alive

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[0 : 00] Well, the title of my presentation and our interaction around it was given to me. I didn't come up with the title. A dozen people asked if I would come and speak on the mission of God and congregations fully alive.

And I'm to do this in 45 minutes or less. Like, what am I supposed to do? I mean, given the scope of the mission of God, we could spend hours, days, weeks, years working through the theme.

The mission of God and congregations fully alive in 45 minutes. Like, how am I supposed to do justice to that in now 44 minutes?

Now, as Doug knows, I have been praying. Actually, I've been agonizing, asking God to give me a way to paint a picture of the full scope of God's mission while focusing on what he wants us to do in this place, at this time, in this place's time.

So, I offer you what I think will most give pleasure to God this morning. And I'm going to pray again. Living God, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, we thank you that through your word you have revealed who you are and what you are on about in the world.

[1 : 34] And I pray now that you would take us deeper into you and into your passion. And we ask this in Jesus' name. Amen. Well, I'd like to frame my presentation and the interaction.

I think you have an outline there, right? In three ways. One, the God of the mission of God. Two, the mission of the God of mission.

And three, congregations alive in God's mission. Or congregations alive in the missionary God's mission.

Which we will see simply means being alive in the God of mission. Being alive in the God of mission.

Congregations alive in the God of light are fully alive in light. No. Congregations alive in the God of love are fully alive in love.

[2 : 46] No. Congregations alive in the God of mercy are fully alive in mercy. Congregations alive in the God of truth are fully alive in truth.

Congregations alive in the God of mission. Are fully alive in mission. Since the only God there is, is the God of mission.

Congregations alive in God are fully alive in the mission of the God of mission. How could it be otherwise? There.

That's all I need to say. Thank you for inviting me, Doug. I did that in three minutes. Okay. Okay.

Let's work through the three ways of framing my presentation and then our interaction.

First way. The God of the mission of God. The one true living God is a God who creates the world.

[3 : 51] God of mission. God of mission. God of mission. Sustains the world. Love the world. Hates sin and evil in the world. Grieves over and for the world in its sin and evil.

And acts to redeem the world. And acts to redeem the world. From its sin and evil. From its sin and evil. And from the death to which sin and evil. Which sin and evil gave birth.

The one true living God is a God of mission. A God on a mission. Now for me the prototypical text is Exodus chapter 3 verses 7 and 8.

You know the text well. Moses is at the burning bush. And he hears God speak. I have surely seen the affliction of my people in Egypt. I have heard their cry.

Or I have given heed to their cry. Because of their taskmasters. For I am aware of or I feel their sufferings. So I have come down to deliver. The one true living God is a God who sees.

[4 : 57] And hears. And feels. And comes down. The one true living God is a God who. Sees. The suffering of the world.

Who hears. The cries of the world. Who feels. The suffering of the world. And comes down. To do something about it. Which is what we see then lived out in the rest of the biblical story. The God who sees. And hears. And feels. And comes down. Gives himself. For the life of the world. The living God is a.

Giving God. The living God is a. Sending God. The father. Who loves the world. Sends the son. Whom he has loved for all eternity. To save the world.

In every way the world needs to be saved. And then. The son who loves the world. Sends the spirit of the father and son. Who is the embodiment. Of the love between the father and son.

[5 : 57] For all eternity. Sends the spirit. To win the world. To the son. And to fill those he wins. With the very life of the son. To make those he wins.

Into adopted sons and daughters. Of the father who loves the world. And sends the son and spirit. The one true living God. Is the sending God. Because.

The one true living God. Is the God. Of self-giving. Self-emptying love. The living God. Has always existed as love.

The father giving himself. To the son. The son giving himself. To the father. The father giving himself. To the spirit. The son giving himself. To the father. On and on it goes.

The eternal community. Of self-giving. Emptying love. One of the great texts. In forming our lives. And mission. Is Philippians.

[6 : 53] Chapter 2. Verses 5 to 11. You know this great. Christological hymn. It begins. Who. Because. He was in the form of God. Did not consider equality.

With God. To be something. To take advantage of. But emptied himself. Taking the form of a servant. It's not. Although. He was in the form of God. He took the form of a servant.

But it's. Because. He was in the form of God. That he took the form of a servant. Jesus Christ. Takes up the life of a servant. Not in spite of being God. But because he is God.

Revealing the fact. That there is no other God. But this self-emptying God. Who comes all the way down. Sending his very best.

Sacrificing. All that he is. For the life of the world. So we're not surprised. That this God. Then sends. Those he wins.

[7 : 54] On Easter evening. The disciples are gathered together. In Jerusalem. Behind closed doors. Out of fear. Jesus comes. And he shows them his wounds. He breathes on them. He gives them. The Holy Spirit.

He speaks peace to them. And he says. As the Father sent me. So I send you. Of course. To belong.

To the sending God. Is to be sent. To follow the sending God. Is to be sent. To love the self-emptying Savior. Is to be called.

Into the joy. Of this self-emptying. For the life of the world. Mark chapter 2. Verses 13 to 14. Jesus went up to the mountain.

And summoned. Those whom he wanted. And they came to him. And he appointed 12. That they might. Be with him. And that he might.

[8 : 51] Send them. He summons. Us to himself. Glory. Because he wants us. Says the text. Glory.

To be with him. Ah. To be with him. What glory. That he might send us. What glory. This is the dynamic.

Of life with Jesus. With him. To be sent by him. With him again. To be sent by him again. With him again. To be sent by him again. Those who belong.

To the sent. And sending savior. Find themselves. Sent again. And again. Day after day. After day. Summoned. Day after day. To be with him. So that day after day.

He might. Send them. But not sent. Into mission. For him. Rather. Sent into mission.

[9 : 47] With him. This is critical. To grasp. I see some of you. Shaking your heads. He does not call us. To be with him. And then send us out.

Without him. No. He who sends us. Goes with us. Lo I'm with you always. Even to the end of the age. Indeed.

He who sends us. Turns out to be. Ahead of us. He who sends us. Is already. Where he sends us. And invites us. To join him. In his mission. Where he sends us. Which means. That in every missionary. Context. The true missionary. Is the missionary God.

Who is already there. Before we get there. Who is already. Work. At work. Before we get there. Very much at work. Who is already.

[10:43] Then inviting us. To join us. In his. Already. At work. Ness. When we think of working. For God.

In the world. We can grow. Very weary. And might even. Slip into despair. But when we think of working. With God. In the world.

There might be times. Of weariness. But we will not. Grow weary. For. When we enter into mission. With God. The God of mission. Takes us up.

Into his own life. Into his power. And wisdom. And joy. And we find ourselves. Strangely filled. Even as we empty. Ourselves. It is not.

Mission for God. But mission with God. Now all of this. Having huge implications. For being the church. I do not know. Who first said it. But I like it. The mission of God.

[11:39] Has a church. Not the church. Has a mission. The mission of God. Has a church. Not the church. Has a mission. Which comes first? Church or mission?

Mission. Yes. God is gathering. Out of all the nations. A people for himself. This is what ancient Israel. Was all about. Gathering the nations. Out of the nations.

A people for himself. Who would be part of the process. Of gathering more people. Out of the nations. To make a people for himself. But being the church. Is not the end. Completing the mission.

Is the end. The missionary God. Is on a mission. And gathers people. To join him in the mission. The church does not have. A mission. The mission has a church. And the church.

Is the first installment. Of that mission. So that the mission. Can continue. Until one day. The whole cosmos. Is what God. Wills it to be. Okay. That's the first way. Of framing my presentation.

[12:34] And our interaction. The God. Of the mission of God. And we can say a whole lot more. About that. The second way. The mission.

Of the God of mission. What exactly is. The mission of God. In 45 minutes. Or a lot less now. A better way.

I think. To ask the question. And to make this. Whole matter. More accessible. To all the people. Of our congregations. Is to ask the question. So. What is God up to.

In the world. I think. This is the question. We in leadership. Have to ask ourselves. Again and again. So. What is God. Up to. In the world.

Now. There are so many. Biblical texts. To which we could turn. For an answer. Genesis 12. Verses 1 to 3. The call upon Abraham. And Sarah. I will bless you.

[13:29] So. That. You might be a blessing. In you. All the families of the earth. Will be blessed. Exodus 3.

I've already mentioned. The God who sees. And hears. And feels. And comes down. Psalm 68. I'm going to read Psalm 68. Actually. I won't do an exposition of it.

But I want to read this. Because this came alive for me. In 1984. When I had the privilege. Of participating. In the first ever. International Prayer Assembly.

It was called by. The Luzon Committee. On World Evangelization. And it was held in South Korea. For. For two weeks. And the only purpose of this event. Was to pray. For world evangelization. And that.

The whole event. Was built on Psalm 67. Be gracious to us. And bless us. And God. Be gracious to us. And bless us.

[14:21] And cause his face. To shine upon us. Selah. Selah. That your way. May be known on the earth. That your salvation. Might be known among the nations.

Let the peoples. Praise you. Oh God. Let all the peoples. Praise you. Let the nations. Be glad. And sing for joy. For you will judge the peoples. With uprightness. And guide the nations.

On the earth. Selah. Let the peoples. Praise you. Oh God. Let all the peoples. Praise you. The earth. Has yielded its produce. God. Our God blesses us.

God blesses us. That all the ends of the earth. May fear him. A great psalm. That just captures. And expands on that call. Upon Abraham. Blessed.

To be a blessing. Another text. Would be Isaiah 42. The first of the four. Servant songs. Of the servant who comes. And will not. Grow weary. And will not give up.

[15:15] Until he's brought justice. To the nations. Luke 4. The great passage. Where Jesus reads from. Isaiah. The spirit of the Lord. Is upon me. And you know the rest of that. Matthew 10.

Where Jesus gives his great sermon. On mission. Acts 1. Verses 1 to 11. Where Jesus promises. The coming of the Holy Spirit. And you will receive power. When the spirit comes upon you. And you will be my witnesses. In all the world. And Matthew 28. 16 to 20. To which we'll refer it. In a moment. Those are texts.

That we could look at. In asking. What is God up to in the world. I think it's helpful. To think in terms. Of the three tenses. Of God's mission. What God has done.

What God is doing. And what God will do. It's helpful to keep. Those three tenses in mind. Why? Because. There are some dimensions.

[16:09] Of the mission of God. About which we do not need. To be concerned. God. I just freed you. From some things. You're going to see in a moment. There are some things.

About the mission of God. About which we do not be concerned. For we did nothing about them. And we can do nothing about them. Namely.

What God has already done. And what God will do. What God has already done. Mercy. What God has already done.

The work of the cross. The work of the empty grave. The work of seating Jesus. On the throne of the universe. The work of the pouring out.

Of the Holy Spirit. Done. Nothing needs to be added. To this work. The power of sin. Has been overcome. The power of evil. Has been overcome.

[17:04] Evil has been defanged. Death has been robbed. Of its finality. The way into the holy. Of holies. Has been opened. The new covenant. Has been cut. And guaranteed.

The way I like to put it is. Everything that needs to be done. For humans to be in relationship. With the holy God. Has been done. Do you believe that? Everything.

That needs to be done. For unholy people. To be in relationship. With the unholy God. Has been done. It's finished. That part. Of the mission of God. Is complete. Completed by God.

By God alone. Done. It only needs now. To be embraced. And experienced. Another way. Of making this point. Is to say. That we then.

In mission. Work from the victory. Not toward it. We're not working. We work from the victory. Over sin.

[18:00] And evil. And death. Not toward it. I learned that from Amy Carmichael. Missionary to India. We work. From the victory. Not toward it. Boy. That changes.

The whole tone of mission. What God has done. And what God will do. Over which we have no control. It's totally out of our hands. God is going to bring about.

A whole new creation. A new heaven. And a new earth. Coming down. Says John. In the revelation of Jesus Christ. Coming down. That is. It's not our doing.

We can build magnificent cities. In this creation. But only God can build. The city of God. In the new creation. And God will. Actually. God already has.

And is just waiting. To bring it down. So. We do not have to worry. About what God has already done. And what God will do. God did not. And will not.

[18:56] Call us to join him. In those parts. Of the mission. They are his to do. And his alone. Okay. So. What God. Calls us to join him.

In doing. Is what he is doing. Between what he has already done himself. And will do himself. And oh. What a mission that is. There are so many verbs. And this is where I was agonizing.

On which do I focus. This morning. So many verbs. To describe God's present mission. Seeking. The laws. You know. The great seeker.

In our time. Is not those to whom. Seeker sensitive. Thinking refers. The great seeker. In our time. Is not human beings. The great seeker. In our time. Is the living God.

A seeker sensitive church. Is sensitive to the seeking God. Who is drawing all kinds of people. To himself. Forgiving sinners.

[19:51] Cleansing sinners. And saints. Reconciling enemies. Befriending broken human beings. Redeeming people. From the pits.

Into which they have fallen. Liberating people. From oppression. And injustice. Freeing people. From addiction. Shining light. Into the darkness. Revealing himself. To seekers.

And to those who are not seeking. Filling human beings. With the Holy Spirit. Filling unholy human beings. With the Holy Spirit. Reigning over those who think they reign. Overruling those who think they rule. Raising up leaders. Bringing down leaders. Raising up empires. Bringing down empires. And on and on it goes. And God calls us to partner with him. In all of that.

And. The part of the mission. I want to emphasize today. God is bringing. Us into the real world. God is seeking to help us function.

[20 : 52] In the real world. I think all those other verbs. That I listed. Really lead to this one. God is bringing us. Into the real world. God is seeking to help us function.

In the real world. What do I mean by that? I think. This is what Jesus is saying. In the closing verses. Of the gospel.

According to Matthew. You know the text well. But I'm going to read it again. Matthew 28. 16 to 20. In fact. Probably. Most of you can just cite this from memory.

Let me read it again. Matthew 28. 16 to 20. But the eleven disciples. Proceeded to Galilee. To the mountain. Which Jesus had designated.

And when they saw him. They worshipped him. But some were doubtful. And Jesus came up. And spoke to them saying. All authority. In heaven. And on earth.

[21 : 48] Has been given to me. Go therefore. And make disciples. Of all the nations. Baptizing them. In the name of the Father. And Son. And Holy Spirit. Teaching them.

To observe all that. I have commanded you. And lo. Or behold. I am with you always. Even to the end. Of the age. Now in this text.

We hear Jesus speaking. His great claim. His great commission. And his great comfort. His great claim.

His great commission. And his great comfort. And I want to submit to you. That the key. Is the great claim. All authority. In heaven.

And on earth. Has been given. To me. All authority. In heaven.

[22 : 44] And on earth. Has been given. To me. Do you believe this? The claim. The claim. Radically. Alters. Our understanding.

Of the world. I submit to you. The church. Has yet. To come to terms. With this claim. Would you agree?

The church. Has yet. To come to terms. With this claim. And I submit to you. That if the church. Does. Come. To terms. With the claim. The church. Will be engaged.

In mission. As never before. The great commission. Is the natural. Implication. Of the great claim. The great claim.

Makes the great commission. The only logical thing. To do. I submit to you. That we're not more engaged. In the great commission. Because we have not yet.

[23 : 41] Come to terms. With the great claim. When we do come to terms. With the great claim. Mission. Is the only logical thing.

To do. And I think. That the great commission. Is simply. About. Helping people.

All the nations. Live in light. Of the great claim. All authority. In heaven. And on earth. Has been given to me.

That. Is the real world. All authority. In heaven. And on earth. Has been given to me.

That's the real world. Most people. Even disciples of Jesus. Think the real world. Is the world. We can. See. And hear. And smell.

[24 : 37] And touch. And taste. And measure. And manipulate. template. But as real. As that world is. It is not yet. The real world.

Jesus calls us. And the nations. Into the real. Real world. And the real world. Is the world. Shaped by Jesus. Claim. All authority.

In heaven. And on earth. Has been given to me. It's hugely audacious. It's not. Politically correct. I know.

And I feel that. It's not politically correct. It was never. Politically correct. In any culture. Of any era. Of history. It's never been.

Politically correct. I was watching. The funeral. For Muhammad Ali. Yesterday. Did any of you. Watch parts of that. You have people. I mean.

[25 : 31] It was just a wide spread. Of religions. Around the world. And I. Imagine myself. Reading that text. In that context. And feeling.

The tension. It would create. All. Authority. In heaven. And on earth. Has been given. To me. Now. If Jesus is wrong.

He's off. His rocker. And. No one. Should follow him. But if Jesus is right. Then everyone. Should follow him. I mean.

Who else. Will you follow? All. Authority. In heaven. And on earth. Has been given. To me. It's been given.

To me. The implication. Being. There is no place. On earth. There's no. Realm. Of life. Over which. Jesus does not.

[26 : 26] Have authority. And I think. This is what we need. To be coming to terms. With as a church. Jesus has ultimate. Authority over.

Marriage. Family. The marketplace. Science. I earned my degree. In physics. Law.

Law. Medicine. Education. Politics. Entertainment. Construction. Sports.

Do you believe that? People may not realize it. People may hear the claim. And dismiss it. People. May hear the claim. And.

Fight it. People may hear the claim. And be very angry. It doesn't change the reality. Jesus Christ has authority over it all.

[27 : 22] And it either works in his way. Or it doesn't work. As we're seeing all over the world. The real world. Is the world in which all authority. Is given to the crucified.

And risen carpenter. Carpenter from Nazareth. Oh my goodness. Therefore. Go. Make disciples of the nations. Holy moly.

It means. I think. Help the nations understand the great claim. It means. Help the nations live in light. Of the great claim. It means.

Help the nations function. In light. Of the claim. Thank God for the great comfort. Law. I'm with you always. For there's no way. That we could live this great commission.

Without the great comfort. Look. Law. It's a command. It means look. I'm with you always. Because that is the real world. I'm always with you.

[28 : 20] His name is Emmanuel. God with us. The with us God. Make disciples. Make followers. Make students. Teach them how to live in the real world. Are you making sense?

So how do we do that? He says first. Well. Teach them to obey. All I have commanded you. Teach them to obey.

All I have commanded you. And Matthew helps us here. I believe Matthew is a great missional document. It's a discipleship manual. I think the driving text of Matthew is the end of the book.

Go make disciples. And so Matthew wanting us to be engaged in this ministry. Gathers up all of Jesus teaching. All that he commanded us. Into five great sermons. Why five?

I think Matthew is also showing that Jesus is the new Moses. Moses had five books. Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy. Jesus has five books. He's at least the new Moses a whole lot more than the new Moses.

[29 : 25] And so you have chapters five to seven. The Sermon on the Mount. Chapter 10. The Sermon on Mission. Chapter 13. On the Mystery of the Kingdom. Chapter 18.

The Sermon on the Management. I had to have an M there to go with those others. What does it mean to be the church? And then chapters 24 and 25. The other Sermon on the Mount. It's all bracketed by these two Sermons on the Mount.

The first Sermon on the Mount. What it means to live in light of the kingdom already come. And then Matthew 24 and 5. The Sermon on the Mount. What it means to live in light of the not yet of the kingdom. The kingdom coming.

And we make disciples by taking people through what Jesus commands. To help them understand the real world.

Jesus in those sermons is describing the real world. But we cannot teach the nations until the church first lives it.

[30 : 26] I think Jesus is saying that the world is supposed to look at the church and say. Oh. Oh. So that's what it means to live in the real world.

And then one in. And baptize them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit. This is huge. Not just dunking people in and drenching them with water.

But dunking people in and drenching them with the Trinitarian name. And not just immersing people in the name. But in the reality behind the name. In the life of the Trinity.

Jesus' desire for disciples in the real world. Is to draw us into the life he shares with the Father and the Spirit. And the mission of the triune God is to help human beings actually live.

In this inner life of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. I think Jesus is saying the world is to be able to look at the church and say. Oh. So that's what it means to live and move and have our very being in the living God.

[31 : 35] Wow. We want in. So what is God up to in the world? What is God inviting us to partner with him in the world?

Helping human beings in every sphere of life. As individuals and nations function in the real world. In the world where Jesus is Lord.

In the world where things work his way. And where therefore human beings are finally made fully alive. So the second way of framing my presentation and interaction.

The first, the God of the mission of God. Second, the mission of the God of mission. And third, congregations alive in the missionary God's mission. Or as I put it in the beginning, congregations alive in the God of mission.

Now, I've already hinted at a number of indications of being alive. And we can name more in our interaction. But let me point to what I think is the clearest sign of a congregation being alive in mission.

[32 : 42] It is a congregation praying the Lord's Prayer. Why do I say that? The center of the Sermon on the Mount where Jesus is describing this real world.

The center of the Sermon on the Mount is the Lord's Prayer. When you look at it in terms of number of verses, it's all put together. The Lord's Prayer is the center. I think this is a structural clue that Jesus gives us that the only way to live this Sermon on the Mount is by praying.

In the Lord's Prayer, the one who is sent by the sending God now expresses the heart's desire of the sending God. That makes sense.

He's been sent into the world. And now in the world, he prays out the desires of the one who sent him into the world. Your name be hallowed. Your kingdom come.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. On earth as it is in heaven. That's the passion of the God of mission. On earth as it is in heaven.

[33 : 50] And I think that little phrase, on earth as it is in heaven, goes with all three petitions. Your name be hallowed on earth as it is in heaven. Your kingdom come on earth as it is in heaven.

Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven. That's the passion of the God of mission. Name be known and honored. Kingdom come and be realized.

Good pleasure be done and enjoyed. Now if you study the Lord's Prayer at all, you know that those verbs, hallow, come, and do, are all in the imperative.

It's, Jesus teaches us to say, do it. Do it. Do it. It's awfully bold. Nowhere in the history of prayer does any prayer teacher put the request of prayer in the imperative.

It's always in a request. Wouldn't you like to do this, God? Oh, please, God. But Jesus teaches us in the Sermon on the Mount to come into the presence of God and say, do it. Yikes. Yikes. So he puts it in the passive form, be done, as a way to soften that.

[34 : 59] It's imperative passive, but it's in the imperative because only God can do it. Only the Father can make his name known on earth as it is in heaven.

Only the Father can bring his kingdom on earth as it is in heaven. Only the Father can do his good pleasure on earth as it is in heaven. So I suggest that congregations alive in the mission of the God of missions are congregations on their knees.

Father, you must do it. You must fulfill your mission. We, your people, will join you in whatever work you call us to join you in.

But when it all comes down to it, only you can fulfill the mission. Only you can finally bring human beings into the real world. So in Jesus' name, we say to you, Father, do it.

And God's missionary people say, amen. Human beings take hell. vertically, can they be blessed? Amen. 14 loving hull supportive Light filled standing Pil ■ 300 30 30 40 41