

# Mission Motivated by the Glory of Christ

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[ 0 : 00 ] I don't know about you, but I love to wander around cities. You are in a city at present, so my guess is you enjoy wandering around cities.

I was just saying to Colin earlier on, our daughter was absolutely delighted to be in Glasgow this morning and see all of the peoples and see the car go down the slide onto the big road. She was absolutely buzzing with excitement because there are so many amazing things to see. For me, it's always the amazing landmarks, the architecture of cities. I love to go around about places in the world and see them. But it's not simply to see big old buildings or new modern architecture that I go there. I also like to go to cities because I love to see people.

You take a walk through some of the cities of the world, take a walk through Glasgow, or some of the big cities in places like East Asia, for example, and you will just be overwhelmed at just how many people there are.

[ 1 : 02 ] All in the same location. Some of them going the same direction as you, most of them not going that way, and you have to struggle your way through it. Why do I start like this?

And what has this got to do with Isaiah? Well, number one, Isaiah is actually writing to the people of God in Jerusalem into a city context. He is a great urban prophet. He is speaking a word to God's people about what it is that they are to be involved in in their urban setting.

But that's not the number one reason for it. The reason for this being the introduction is quite simple. We are supposed to have a concern for people because the Lord has a concern for people. And quite easily, we can become desensitized to people and to those who we see and hear around about us, just as if we were walking through a major city in the world.

I've had the privilege to go to the city where our sister Katrina lives and serves. It is massive. You don't understand the size of cities until you've been to somewhere like that.

[ 2 : 06 ] And it is so quick and easy for us to be desensitized to real people with real needs wandering around about us. And it's understandable because we need to make sense of the world.

We can't understand everyone's situation around about us. We've got things to do. We've got broccoli to buy. We've got tires to repair and to fix. We've got things that we have to get on with. There's a sense in which we have to desensitize to an extent.

Otherwise, our mind and our heart would implode. The challenge that we face is that we can buy into this world. We can buy into this desensitization so much that it affects our heart before God, our mind before God, and it can derail our discipleship in the way of Jesus Christ.

Quite easily, it can creep into the way that we make sense of God's mission in his world and our role as part of it. We can become deadened to the glory of God. We can become deadened to the gospel of God's glory in Christ Jesus.

And we can become numb to the real needs of those that we live alongside, that we work alongside, that we play football or other sports alongside. And we forget that there are real needs with real people who are just the same as you and I.

[ 3 : 24 ] And yet they do not have Christ. So how, as God's people, do we combat this? If this is something that happens to us, how do we combat this?

And how do we combat it when there are so many big decisions in everyday life? Well, I want us to hook onto two major things which hopefully draw out the essence of these passages.

And it is this, number one, that we are to be a thankful people filled with praise, which we see in chapter 52. And second thing that I want us to think about is that we are to be an obedient people who are firm in the gospel, which is we see in that beautiful passage in Isaiah 52 and 53.

So first of all, let's think about this. We are to be a people who are thankful, filled with praise. A thankful people filled with praise. Well, Isaiah has been speaking to the people of God so far for the last 50 or so chapters, explaining to them that there is a day coming when they will be judged. They are going to face judgment as a result of their rebellion against God, his lordship and his kingship, and all of the grace that he has shown to them. But at this point, we don't hear that message of judgment straight away.

[ 4 : 42 ] We are hearing the announcement that this judgment is not the end of the story. God, in his grace and in his mercy, was going to redeem his people and restore his presence with his people.

He was going to do what he had said all along, right from the very calling of his people, that he was going to restore, redeem, and bring his presence amongst them. And what we see in this section, we see in 52 verses 3 to 6, is that this redemption was going to cost.

This redemption was definitely going to cost, but it was not going to be a financial cost. That's what we do straight away, isn't it? We hear the word cost and we think about finance. Maybe time.

In some way, what God is going to do is intervene in this situation in a way which is of great cost to him. And it is not going to be something which is simply economic.

Now picture this scene with me. This is what we've got to get in our minds for understanding Isaiah 52, so that we can make sense of Isaiah 53. There is a conflict taking place.

[ 5 : 52 ] And there are men of war taking up their positions on the walls of the great city. If people have watched the Lord of the Rings series of films from the early 2000s, the picture that I want to have in your mind, or if you've not watched the films and you've read the books, the pictures that I want to have in your mind are something like Helm's Deep Battle and they're on the walls ready to be attacked by a massive army that is just dark and is going to oppress and is going to destroy.

Or standing on the walls of Minas Tirith and there is just this overwhelming force ready to swarm the city of hope. That's what we've got to have in our minds because that is how Isaiah is thinking. We are the light to the nations and we are going to be swarmed. We are waiting to hear what is happening. Imagine what is going through the minds and the hearts of the people in this scene that is being painted by Isaiah.

Is this it? Is this the end? Are we all going to die? Is this where the promise finishes up? We take a glance.

Is there going to be a messenger of hope saying that the army has retreated and will not come to attack? Or is that force coming down and the coming judgment is about to fall?

[ 7 : 21 ] And what they see and hear next in this scene is nothing other than wonderful good news of grace and of mercy because they should be swarmed and destroyed.

And yet verses 7 to 8, what do we hear? How beautiful on the mountains are the feet of those who bring good news, who proclaim peace, who bring good tidings, who proclaim salvation, who say to Zion, your God, reigns.

We're to have in our minds eye a runner who is coming with this wonderful news as he rounds the corner panting with breath. As he runs through the heat of the day, he cries out, Peace!

Happiness! Salvation! Your God reigns! And this message of good news echoes out and the watchmen rejoice.

They burst into praise because hot on the heels of the one who is the messenger who has rounded the corner is not only this beautiful message, but it is the one who the message points to, the one who deserves the praise.

[ 8 : 26 ] It is the Lord himself who is returning to Zion. It is not an army of oppression coming to destroy. It is the Lord himself not coming to overthrow his people, but coming to dwell with his people. Before long, understandably, the echoes of the message of great and wonderful news resound in shouts of joy with the city of Jerusalem, forming this breathtaking choir of praise.

And one day in Jerusalem, these cries of joy would find their fullest expression, but they would quickly turn to shouts of mockery and derision.

And instead of the cry of joy, there is the cry of anguish and sorrow, of pain and betrayal. My God, why have you forsaken me? This is all very nice, but what does that mean for our mission?

What has that got to do with my life, Martin, in the here and now in Glasgow, or wherever it is that I find myself in the world? Well, this beautiful chapter, this beautiful section of God's word is a helpful window reminding us that even though we do not deserve the presence of God, even though in one

sense we deserve to be overwhelmed and swarmed by the darkness which exists in this world as a result of sin, God graciously acts in salvation for his people in such a way that we can be in his presence.

And I think it's fair to say that sometimes the people of God forget how gracious, awesome and wonderful that truly is. We have become so used to the fact that we can be in his presence, we forget just how wonderful it is that it is the greatest gift, that God is the gospel, that to see the Lord returning to Zion, to be in his presence, is the greatest thing that we can ever have in the whole of our lives.

[10:31] We do well to pause and to stop and to remember that we do not deserve the perfection of his presence. And yet our Father and our God graciously, lovingly delights to make his presence amongst his people.

And flowing out from this, it helps us to recapture something, therefore, of the thankfulness which should pour out from us as the Lord's people. As believers in the Lord Jesus, we are reminded that the fullness of this picture is seen in the cross of Jesus because our God has saved us.

Your God has saved you. Your God reigns. Death cannot hold him. Nothing can stop him. No power overthrows him.

When he says it is finished, it is finished. He is the Alpha and the Omega. He knows you. And he reigns.

And gladly delights to presence himself with you and with me, even though we don't deserve it. One of the key characteristics which will both fuel mission and create opportunities for mission in God's purposes in his world is this.

[11:50] A heart of thankfulness which leads to praise and adoration of God in Christ. It turns out that if we are dour and boring and don't actually show joy or praise, why will the world turn round and look at us and say, hey, you're not any different from us at all.

We don't think there's any hope either. Perhaps one of the reasons that we are ineffective in the mission of God is because we have forgotten the joy that should overwhelm us and enthuse us and fill us with passion about how much the Lord has done for me.

So here is the question. It's obvious, straightforward, and simple. Are you a thankful person? Are you a thankful person? And I don't mean this in the superficial way of, you know, do you get a bit excited sometimes and, you know, do you say thanks when someone opens a door for you?

I'm not meaning that at all. I'm saying, are you a thankful person from the core of your being? Is that what wells up inside of you when you read these passages and you hear that your God reigns? Do you say, my God, my King, my Saviour, all thanks and glory be to you because without you I have nothing.

Western Christians do have one of the greatest challenges because it's very hard for us to actually say, Father, without you I have nothing because actually we've got quite a lot and that is one of the things which cripples us in the mission of God.

[13:30] We've got so much and we think we've got it and we think we've earned it. We have made our lives the way they are forgetting that nothing, nothing comes from us.

All has been given from the sovereign, providential, good hand hand of a good father. Are you a thankful person? That is the sort of worship that should characterize all of us.

It is not the sort of thing which comes easily to us but it certainly seems to be the way that the Bible speaks about what it means for us as God's people to respond to his goodness to us, to be thankful people and from that welling up is our activity in God's mission.

Whether it's in church or at our homes, whether it is now or it is in the future, on the other side of the world or in Scotland, this heart of thankfulness before God is the thing which leads us to praise God in Christ for who he is and what he has done and it is also the key which sustains us as disciples and keeps us focused on God and his mission and our role in it.

So let's get a little bit more personal because Martin loves to keep himself at a distance, doesn't he? What happens, what plans, sorry, what steps are you taking?

[14:55] what things are you putting in place to cultivate a healthy heart attitude of thankful, praise-filled worship personally and as the people of God corporately that will display the riches and the irresistible grace of Christ to people who think they're going to be swarmed and overthrown by the darkness.

What things are we putting in place to cultivate a healthy attitude of thankful, praise-filled worship as individuals, as believers accountable before God but also as the church of God in this city.

But wait a minute though. In one scene in chapter 52 there is a battle taking place and in the next scene there is a messenger with good news in this same chapter. Surely we need to ask this question how is this battle won?

How is it possible for everybody to be absolutely fearful for their lives thinking that the end is coming and then very quickly it is all turned upside down? It goes from a situation of depression and darkness to light and life.

How is the battle won? What is the ground for this celebration? What is the ground for the thankfulness which should characterize us as the people of God? Well this is the section I want us to think about being obedient people firm in the gospel.

[16:23] This well known passage in Isaiah. Because what we see next is an insight into the greatest moment in history which explains in part how the battle is won.

The servant of the Lord will become the sacrificial offering for the people of God. Now let's be fair Isaiah doesn't know when he doesn't know when but as we observed last night he knows it will happen because it is the Lord who says these things.

He doesn't know when this is going to take place in the future but he knows it will happen because it is the Lord who has spoken. I mean no mistake about this this is one of the most profound passages in God's word leading us to recognize something of the depth and the beauty of the cross of the Lord Jesus Christ and it is so important that we reaffirm that what we make of the cross is not something which is secondary.

What we make of the cross of Jesus what we make of his death on the cross is not something which is secondary it is central and what we hear and read of in this passage demands our obedience demands our attention and should act as part of the firm foundation that we have as believers for our conviction that Jesus Christ is Lord and King and that there is no other there is no other rock that we can go to that is higher than I than God himself in Christ Jesus our Lord.

You cannot read this section and not see how frequently it comes up that this servant steps into the place of another. What's so clear is that this servant doesn't deserve the punishment which is about to be laid on him it is not because he somehow is imperfect it is not because he is impure the servant acts justly righteously and wise we see in 52 verses 13 and following he is good he is the perfect example of what it means to know and love God no the servant is not the one who deserves the punishment it is the people the servant is serving who deserve the punishment.

[18:45] John Stott that great preacher and pastor from the city of London speaking about the cross explains this he says before we see the cross as something done for us we need to recognize that the cross was something done by us.

Do you recognize that? I don't know if all of you know and love Jesus it's one of the privileges of being a guest I don't know where you stand so I have the great privilege to say to you come to know Jesus come to know him at the cross there are great and wonderful blessings and benefits but before we understand that it is something that has been done for us we all need to acknowledge that it is something that has been done by us in our rebellion in doing our own things and pretending that God doesn't exist do you know God in Jesus at the cross maybe today he's saying to you do you hear me in my word do you see the glory of my servant who does what you cannot do and gives the offer of life in all of its fullness acknowledge that this is something that you have done and receive from Christ the grace that only he can give this is the heart of the good news of Christianity this is the heart of the gospel of God for a world which is turned in on itself and against him the spotless servant takes the place of guilty rebels the king takes the place of those who are treasonous here is the heart and the character of God revealed for all to see that the father takes great delight in the obedience of the son verses 10 to 12 it is the father who takes great delight in the obedience of the son the servant as he takes each labored step up the hill to his impending death

I want us to be crystal clear on this the cross and particularly the wrath absorbing sin defeating death of Jesus as the substitute for sinners on the cross is the moment where we see the glory of God revealed in its fullness for all people throughout all time and history many people will say that this is an awful thing why would a God who is good do this why would a God who is loving see his son in such anguish others will say things like this to us oh it is a great act of sacrifice and of love isn't it it is such an example to us and in one sense that latter point is correct it is a great example

but if we stop there we fail to get to the very core and the heart of what it means to be motivated by the glory of God in

Christ in his mission for Christians holding to the faith that has been once entrusted to us it is essential that we know believe affirm and remain obedient to the truth that the cross and the blood of Jesus Christ was the sacrificial substitution for sinners now and forever and it is the only means through which people like you and me escape the deserved wrath and hell which should await us the crucified God is the key to understanding who we are why we are here and how we are changed from wandering sheep to welcomed little children to a father who loves us this is the glory of the gospel this is the glory of Christ this self sacrifice for the glory of his father and for the fame of his name is that which all eternity will echo out in praise for all eternity will see the lamb who was slain with nail marks and they will praise him because he is the one who has brought salvation for his people that's what the great climax of the bible teaches us isn't it in the book of revelation salvation belongs to our god and to the lamb the one whose blood has purchased people from every tribe and tongue and language and nation and that is a beautiful reality which drives us to joy filled obedience in the mission of our great god and king doesn't it to make his name known to the ends of the earth for all people deserve to know of this god and our god and king because of his great worth and value deserves glory from all that he has made the reason that you and I have hope is because christ has accomplished salvation and through his spirit at work in us he is applying the wonderful realities of that salvation into our lives day after day after day even when we stumble even when we fall even when we can't be bothered keeping going on he applies that salvation by the spirit at work in our lives that is why we take hope that is why we have hope our god does not abandon us because of the sacrificial servant we have great hope it is the reason that your work colleagues that your local community your family members this city of glasgow and the whole nation of scotland can have hope because hope is found in the salvation which flows out from christ on the cross hope is found in the servant who puts himself in the place of those who deserve wrath and yet brings them grace and mercy the cross of christ should fill us with compassion and also create in us a great confidence we have compassion because we have been so loved by god we have been so loved by god this amazing love of god is our experience and so we earnestly desire that all people everywhere throughout this world should know understand experience this amazing good news of god in jesus christ and understand the experience of the love of god in christ jesus but we also have confidence because the gospel is powerful friends do you believe that the gospel is powerful sometimes we become so lethargic that we forget the power of the gospel forgetting that all we need to do is go into our bathrooms and look at a mirror and recognize the power of the gospel christ is so powerful that he can awaken me the gospel is so good and so powerful that it can take dead people like me and make them alive to god's presence his purposes my own sin and the realities of eternity the gospel is powerful because it creates faith in those who do not yet believe and it brings people into a living relationship with god in christ is there not a time or a season right now in our whole nation where that great message of hope needs to be heard where we face an uncertain future as a country both in scotland and the wider union where people don't know what is going to happen with our economy where the foundation and fabric of family and society seems to be crumbling under the weight and the pressure of all that happens around about us in 21st century uk living is that not a call for us as the people of god to have great confidence in the god who awakens the dead to have great confidence in a god who gives us a gospel which is so powerful and hope filled joy saturated that people cannot do anything other than hear something of him when they meet with this beautiful servant who has given himself for them as we walk around about our workplaces in the coming weeks or as we walk around about the city of glasgow as we see the the buildings around about us that will be filled with thousands of people come tomorrow morning or maybe as we go on holiday at other parts of this season that we're coming into or other parts of the year ahead i want to plead with all of us that we do not become those who are desensitized like i was saying right at the very beginning to the needs of others we're all tired i get that

[ 27 : 52 ] my goodness spend some time through in the creche there with my two kids and you'll get it we're all tired there's all tons of stuff to do we've all got car tires to fix we've all got broccoli to buy we've all got the little chores that we need to do but let's not be desensitized to people made in the image of god who do not know him who do not give him glory and who do not know that they will be separated from him as we get the tasks done as we enjoy the buildings of the city that we live in don't allow the real needs of real people to pass us by don't become so numbed to people

that they do not pierce your heart we are meant to have our hearts pierced because there was one who was pierced for us and for our transgressions who invites us to walk in his way instead let's be people who are captivated by god by the god of the bible who at the cross disarmed the powers of evil disarmed sin and satan hell and death and accomplishes salvation for the guilty accomplishes salvation for the sinner accomplishes salvation for those who are at the highest in our society and for those who the world don't even want to acknowledge exist recognize that the god who has saved us is the god who can bring new life to spiritually dead people because that is our own experience the needs of those around about us are real the needs of those that we know are real but we as god's people know that the gospel deals with these great spiritual needs and that this gospel is powerful so friends be a thankful people be a thankful joy filled people moving forward in god's mission together and be an obedient people firm in the central truths of that great gospel that the life that we now live we live to the son of god who loved us and gave himself for us let's pause for a moment and pray and then we'll sing father we surrender all to you now those of us who are your people those of us who know you we thank you for your grace in the gospel and for those of us who don't yet know you father we do pray would you show us jesus and would we find in him the light of life the savior that we need and the one who welcomes us in with pierced hands and with a wounded side changing us from wandering sheep to love children amen