

Mission - For the praise of God's glory

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[0 : 0 0] Good morning, church family. Like Dave said, we're reading from Psalm 96. O sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing to the Lord, bless his name. Tell of his salvation from day to day. Declare his glory among the nations, his marvellous works among all the peoples.

For great is the Lord and greatly to be praised. He is to be feared above all gods. For all the gods of the peoples are worthless idols, but the Lord made the heavens.

Splendour and majesty are before him. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. Ascribe to the Lord, O families of the peoples.

Ascribe to the Lord glory and strength. Ascribe to the Lord the glory due his name. Bring an offering and come into his courts.

[0 : 5 9] Worship the Lord in the splendour of holiness. Tremble before him all the earth. Say among the nations, the Lord reigns. Yes, the world is established.

It shall never be moved. He will judge the peoples with equity. Let the heavens be glad and let the earth rejoice. Let the sea roar and all that fills it.

Let the fields exult and everything in it. Then shall all the trees of the forest sing for joy before the Lord. For he comes. For he comes to judge the earth.

He will judge the world in righteousness and the peoples in his faithfulness. Well, Matt and Grace, you're probably feeling a mixture of things.

I'm not quite sure what you'll be feeling, but a bit of excitement. But I'm also guessing this is one of the most uncertain times of your life that you've experienced.

[2 : 0 4] With the future, very uncertain. So this morning we really want to just commend the truths of God's word that us elders, we know you already know these things.

We wouldn't be sending you if you didn't. But it's no trouble to us to encourage you to fix your eyes on these things. And it's good for us as a church family to remember these things as well.

So I think as a church family, we're starting a new year. I don't know about you, but I'm setting plans for the year.

I consider the hardships that I'm facing, that my brothers and sisters are facing, and we want to find meaning and strength in them. And I think in all that, we need to come back to that ultimate question of if the Lord has delivered us out of the world, it would be so much better if we were with Christ right now.

So why has he got us here, sending us back into the world? So this morning, yeah, I'm going to be talking to you, Matt and Grace, a lot. But it's really for our whole church family to be hearing these things as well.

[3 : 1 0] So why on earth would you leave all that's familiar, your country with all the rights and security that are easily accessible, and your parents and wider family and taking their granddaughter away, your home that you built that we love to fill stuff with, and the comfort and nourishment of belonging to an established church, why would you leave all that behind and go into the unknown, to the people and language and culture you don't know?

You can only plan a few days ahead of you, and even then, that's not certain. You're trying to take on a new skill set from what you've vocationally done thus far.

And you know that you're going to a people who don't want to hear what you've got to say. You know that your goal is an impossible task, that people who are happy living for themselves, apart from God, will turn to Christ in faith and joy.

What's going to keep you grounded? How are you going to keep your bearings? I think you need to keep clear what the basis of mission is.

What is the fundamental reason you're going? You've got to keep this clear in your minds. So what is the purpose of mission? What is the basis of mission in the world?

[4 : 47] I think many Christians might answer, because people are lost and in danger of judgment. And that's true. If we were, with our compassion as we went about mission, someone would be very cold and heartless.

Something wouldn't be right. But it's not the basis. The basis is in Psalm 96. Because from verse 4, The most basic truth of all reality is that there is one God, Father, Son and Holy Spirit.

Now, in our present time, many people are worshipping, I think, Linal Messi at the moment. After winning the World Cup, I saw in the news feed that one guy got a tattoo of Messi on his forehead. There's an option. You could get Jesus on your forehead if you wanted. Anyway, that's not in my script. Linal Messi. People are worshipping him, but his splendour. Just consider his splendour. Why people are worshipping this guy. It is so limited to a soccer field. And his splendour is already fading in his 30s. He's going to have to retire soon.

[6 : 23] And like Pele before him, he's going to be dead one day. And people will be cheering for someone else. People are worshipping this man. And what puny splendour.

But then compare that to the splendour of the Lord. Like, I got to be in Jindabyne over the Christmas break and just getting away from the light of the city.

Again, you just get the night sky. My dad was trying to film auroras. Just the galaxy that praises him. The sun that comes up every day declaring his mercy, his goodness to mankind. You just look at the creativity in this room of all the personalities.

And that's just the reflected glory of God that we see in creation. Like, what splendour the Lord has. That the oceans roar his greatness.

[7 : 26] That splendour. And his majesty is like no other person in authority you've ever met. Like, some people in authority, you shake before them.

But scripture tells us the people who have got even a glimpse of his majesty haven't just shaken. They've fallen down dead as though dead before him.

His majesty is that great. All strength belongs to him. All beauty is from him. It reflects his own beauty. He is beauty.

He has made all things to show how glorious he is. And if even inanimate stars and galaxies and trees sing and oceans roar, all things were made to worship him, how much more should men and women and boys and girls who have the faculties to know him personally be worshipping him? In light of that, how awful is the current state of so many people's hearts and the state of the world? Even here in Newcastle, people were worshipping worthless idols.

[8 : 50] Setting themselves up as if they can determine life. That what I think equals reality is what our culture is saying here.

People were just devoting themselves to worthless things. And then where you're going, people were bowing down towards a God that cannot hear them.

A God that cannot speak to them. A God that cannot save them. The world is in an awful state. The world is worthy of every person and every nation's delight. And yet, so many are delighting in worthless things.

And the Lord takes himself seriously. He's determined to have all creation respond in ecstatic rejoicing in him alone.

[9 : 56] He is so determined to bring this about that he's brought about a great salvation for all the world. For us who have plunged ourselves into impurity, he has made a way to wash us clean through the death of his son so that we can stand before the splendour of his holiness and not tremble in dread, but tremble in delight.

He's made a way. And he's made a way for us to know real life in raising his son from the dead. He raises us also.

He has conquered everything. He is the source of life. He is determined to rescue his people from every nook and cranny of this world so that the whole world might give him the praise he is worthy of.

He wants people to delight in him, in what is true, what is good, what is beautiful. So why does mission exist?

Well, I'm going to quote John Piper here and there's a little article on the second page of the bulletin which is well worth your time. Missions exist because worship doesn't.

[11 : 23] The Lord is worthy of every person and every nation's total delight and he's achieved everything to bring about that through his son's death and resurrection.

Mission exists because worship doesn't. So Matt and Grace, your task is done, our task is done when that day arrives that's pictured in Revelation chapter 5.

The day is coming, it's already begun but it's going to be brought to completion when everyone is singing worthy are you for you were slain and by your blood you ransomed people for God from every tribe and language and people and nation.

When the whole world is singing with the angels, worthy is the lamb who was slain to receive power and wealth and wisdom and might and honour and glory and blessing when everyone's saying life is in you Lord Jesus.

When that day comes mission can stop. When the whole world with the ocean roaring and the trees singing and every human being singing the praise of the one who is worthy of all praise we won't need to be on mission and God is determined to bring that day about.

[12 : 54] He's done everything to secure it in the death and resurrection of his son. So the basis of mission is that God is worthy of every person and nation's delight.

He's worthy of all worship. Christ is worthy to receive the reward of his suffering. He was determined to bring it about. So that's the basis.

So how should we considering the next question how should we think of ourselves in this task of being sent into the world to represent God? How should we think of ourselves in this task of mission?

I think Psalm 96 is again a great picture for us in the first verses. Oh sing to the Lord a new song. Sing to the Lord all the earth.

Sing to the Lord bless his name tell of his salvation from day to day declare his glory among the nations his marvellous works among all the peoples. This isn't a description of what we call missionaries.

[14 : 03] This is a description of what we call a Christian a believer. Missions isn't primarily a task that we have to accomplish.

Singing his praises declaring his glory is just the natural overflow. It's the natural response to what we've received from God in Christ.

It's not that I have this task called telling people the gospel and I need to find creative manipulative ways to help them buy into it. That's not what it is.

It's I praise his glory and I want people to join that song. I think it helps to realise and C.S. Lewis helped me grasp this point that we all praise.

We all praise what we love. We can't help it. Whether you think about what gets you excited what your mind just goes to and you love thinking and planning what gives you delight and what comes out of your mouth therefore you can't help but speak about it.

[15 : 14] people praise books and restaurants and their romantic loves and they praise like Messiah talking about. We can't help it. Everyone is praising praising, praising.

The only question is is it worthy of our praise and so a Christian is someone whose heart has just been captured by the love of God and so they naturally just sing.

It just comes out of them and not just sing with our words but you can just see it in our choices in our life. So Matt and Grace, this new identity that you're taking on called missionary, I'm going to suggest to you that that's not fundamentally who you are, missionary, because the Lord might decide you're only going to be overseas for a couple of weeks.

We don't know or it could be the rest of your lives but it's not fundamentally who you are. He wants you to sing his praises wherever you are.

You have already been singing his praises since the time that Christ has captured your hearts. So I think just get that clear in your minds that you already are singing his praises and you always will be for eternity.

[16 : 42] The title missionary will come and go but that's not fundamentally who you are. And I think the other thing we should be thinking for ourselves is the desire for others to delight in the Lord only comes when we ourselves are delighting in the Lord.

The fuel of mission is your own delight in the Lord. As Piper puts it, you can't commend what you don't cherish. So Matt and Grace again, you've got lots of tasks ahead of you that are on your mind like learning language and finding a place to live and so many other things that are going on, how to

raise Rachel in a different culture with different temptations and different challenges. But can I just urge you to put one task before you always because this one task will empower and guide every other thing you need to do. and that is to know the Lord more and more and more because the more you delight in him, the more your life will demonstrate that he is worthy of everything.

So know him more and more in good times and in bad. God. And I think it's when you know him more and more, that's when your compassion for the people you're going to will actually be sustained.

I might say an outrageous thing here. I don't think we in and of ourselves have the compassion to want people to be saved. It's only when we come to the God who has that compassion for people, that's when we're filled with him to want people to know him.

[18 : 35] So keep knowing him more and more. Delight in him and that will sustain you through whatever hardships you face and it will maintain your compassion.

compassion. The last thing I'll say is because you are called to sing and declare his praises, I think that also transforms how you measure success.

You can't guarantee any results. I think we often think that God wants results like the world measures results in numbers and money and power and influence and things like that.

He made the heavens. He doesn't need all that. He owns all that. So he doesn't need those results. Results is completely up to him. You can't guarantee any of that. So what does success look like then if it's not tangible results necessarily?

[19 : 40] Well, it looks like, let me reframe the question, how you glorify God, is it by results? No, I think you will glorify God when your life is showing that his love is better than life.

You will glorify him when you can show others that he is your delight. And that means that even when things go really bad, even in the hardship and losses and whatever rejection you receive, even when you're facing your own death and losing everything, if your heart can still say, your love is better than life, that's success.

You're bringing glory to him. So the grace of God has taken us out of the world and brought us into a new humanity in Christ and we've been sent back into the world to be embodied witnesses to the heavenly life that we've found in belonging to Jesus.

So the last thing I want to say, Matt and Grace, is can you pray for us as a church family? It's not so much that we need to be committed to supporting you, it's more, pray that we would know the Lord more and more and more so that we as a church will delight in him and just naturally overflow in his praise and want him to be honoured in all the world because that's when we will be of good use and good partnership to you.

Why don't I pray and then we're going to sing. And have a Bible reading and then David will continue. Father, we don't desire your glory anywhere near as much as we should.

[21 : 44] So I pray that you would fill us with yourself. I pray as a church family and for Matt and Grace that you would reveal yourself more and more through your son so that we might cherish you with all our heart and therefore want you to be honoured as you so rightly deserve in all the world.

So fill us with yourself, I pray. Amen. Thank you.