

The Creation and Mission of The Church

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Preacher: J.D. Edwards

[0:00] Creation dictates mission. Creation dictates mission. Think about that. Here's an illustration. It might sound a little bit silly, but bear with me please.

! In 1962, our nation's commander in chief, because that's our president, ordered the creation of an elite division and division.

It's a force for unconventional warfare formed to conduct special operations called the Navy SEALs. You know what SEAL stands for? Sea, Air, and Land.

So a SEAL team was created for a very special mission. The mission of a SEAL team is dictated by the purpose for which they were created. SEALs were not created to make music, though it would be a little comical to see these highly trained, unconventional warfare machines singing like a barbershop quartet.

But that's not what they were created for. SEALs were not created to make hoops either. Some of them might be good at basketball. Other ones might be way too short to play that sport. You could see them playing a game, but that's not why they were the Navy SEALs. The SEALs were definitely not created or formed to bring their sewing machines and make quilts or kilts together.

[1:29] Other people need to do that. And we're grateful for those who have that skill, but that's not why the Navy SEALs were formed. Other people can play basketball. Other people can make music. The Navy SEALs were created to accomplish unconventional missions.

Creation dictates mission. Isn't it true that in our flesh and maybe in our experience with churches in our country today, many of us can forget and maybe many never know who created the church. Our concept of the church is what we assume must go. Man's ideas about church, man's rules, man's preferences, man's opinions.

And if all that's true, that the church is a creation of man, that means that ultimately the mission of the church is man's mission for man's glory. There's no way you can read the Bible and come to that conclusion.

The creation of the church dictates the mission of the church. I want to do my best in these passages to show you four proofs of this and call us to one response.

[2:43] First proof. God's living word creates the church. It's God's living word that brings the church into being. He's the creator. Therefore, he dictates the mission of the church.

Please look again at Acts 1 verse 3. How does the church get created, come to life, get formed? It begins with Jesus Christ, the living, resurrected Savior.

In verse 3, it says he presented himself alive to his people. Remember, this is the same Jesus that John says is the word of God, the voice of God.

It can be translated in other languages. He is the verb, the speech. He is the living word of God. That's who Jesus Christ is in his resurrected, glorified body.

And this Jesus Christ presented himself to them, his disciples, after his suffering by many proofs, appearing to them during 40 days and speaking.

[3:47] What was he speaking about in his glorified state with his disciples? Speaking about, what does yours say in verse 3? The kingdom of God. That would be the most amazing Bible study.

The kingdom of heaven. Come to earth by his finished work. Remember on the road to Emmaus, their hearts burned within them. As Jesus walked them through how this is so.

The living word who dwelt, who tabernacled with us. See, this is what the disciples knew before the cross. This is what they're reassured of even more now after the cross.

Verse 4 says, Jesus said, You heard this from me already.

Where did they hear this from him? We can see this in the other gospels. One example is John 20 verses 19 through 23. Listen to what Jesus told the disciples, promising them. On the evening of that day, the first day of the week.

[5:12] That's the Lord's day. The eighth day. The beginning of the new creation. The doors will be locked where the disciples were for fear of Jews. And Jesus came and stood among them and said, Peace be with you.

When he said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then his disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Now here's what he promised them. This is John chapter 20 verse 21.

Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you. And when he had said this, look what Jesus did.

It's a sign act. He does something to communicate something. Jesus breathed on them. Picture that. The resurrected Jesus. I'm sorry, before the cross. He's promising what he will do.

He, Jesus Christ, the same God, breathing on his disciples as a promise of what they will experience after his resurrection. And he said, receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them.

[6:17] If you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld. It's God's living word, Jesus Christ, who creates the church. It's Jesus Christ who breathes on people like you and me.

Save sinners. And he gives us his Holy Spirit. God breathes the creation of the church into existence. The breathing of God to create.

This should remind us of Genesis 1, verse 2. Remember those verses? How the earth was without form and void, and the darkness was on the face of the deep. Now listen carefully.

The Spirit of God. And the word for spirit in Hebrew is ruach. Ruach. Ruach. The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.

Ruach means, and is used in other parts of scripture, wind, exhaling, sound, breath. It's the living word of God who brought this whole first creation into existence.

[7:30] We read that glorious creation Psalm 104. You see how Jesus is using that same language and imagery, the same work of his living spirit, to breathe on the church and bring the church into creation.

How much more glorious is the church than what we, man, want to make it? What man creates is small and does not last. Amen? But listen to what the church has said.

Listen to what this one Christian named Francis Turretin, who also lived in Geneva about 100 years after Calvin, he said this, the church is the primary work of the Holy Trinity, the object of Christ's mediation, and the subject to whom his benefits are applied.

Christ so loves the church that he gave himself for the church. God's living word creates the church. Therefore, the church is his, and the mission of the church is his. That's the first proof. Here's the second proof. He creates the church, and the church is the beginning of his new creation.

[8:45] So the church is God's new creation inaugurated. I know it might sound like we're repeating the same point, that he created the church.

That's very true. And every congregation that comes together and is formed is by the power of his spirit. But what the church is, it's the inaugurated state of the kingdom of heaven, the new creation already now.

Okay, so I want you to listen for new creation language in Acts tied to examples of new creation in the Old Testament. In Acts chapter 2, let's look there again next. Acts 2 verse 1.

When the day of Pentecost arrived, they were all together in one place, and suddenly there came from heaven a sound like a mighty rushing wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting.

We also read as part of our service today that wonderful passage in Ezekiel where there's a wind and there's a rattling. And that was a prophecy of that future consummated eschaton, like the age to come, but it's inaugurated now already where God raises up those who were dead into an army.

[9:55] It's inaugurated in the church. Think of how in creation God breathed life into the first body. Genesis 2 verse 7 says, The Lord God

formed the man of dust from the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and man became a living creature.

How does a local church have life in God? God breathes into a little local body, just like he breathed life into Adam when he created him.

And throughout redemptive history, God has made a new creation already physically, to foreshadow the new creation he will make spiritually. Think of what the flood was.

The flood was a warning and an initial judgment on this earth of that great judgment day for all eternity that is yet to come. The waters represent the judgment of God and those who pass through on the ark, the one door that God provided for entry and to be preserved, passing through the waters of judgment and enjoying salvation and new life.

As the waters recede, we have a new creation on this same earth, letting us know God will judge all created, all he's created one day again, eternally, but he will provide a passage, a door, redemption for his people.

[11:16] Now listen to the language in Genesis 8.1. God remembered Noah. This is after the flood. And every living thing and all the animals that were with him in the ark.

And after the flood, God made a wind. There's that same Hebrew word. God made a ruach. God made a spirit to pass over the waters and the waters of judgment subsided.

New creation. And now the spiritual new creation is foreshadowed in redemptive history as well. In Genesis chapter 12, God gives this glorious promise to Abraham, the line from which Jesus, the Messiah, would come.

He says, I will make you a great nation. I will bless you and make your name great and you shall be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you and I will curse him who curses you and all the families of the earth shall be blessed in you.

And it's the seed of Abraham, Jesus Christ, who will be a blessing to all the nations. In Exodus 14.21, there is Moses stretching out his hand over the seas.

[12:24] The people of God now, this line of Abraham, this people through whom the Messiah will come, who will be a blessing to all the nations. And it's a new creation again foreshadowed through this people.

Listen to the same language now after they crossed the Red Sea as the language God used after the flood. Listen to this in Exodus 14.21. These former slaves wait upon the Lord now.

Moses stretches out his hand over the Red Sea and the Lord caused the sea to go back. It's like the waters subsiding. And he did this by a strong east wind.

Wind. There's that Hebrew word again. Ruach. All that night, this great wind moving, bringing a new creation. And he made the sea into dry land and the waters were divided.

How is that a picture of a spiritual new creation? These Israelites were an enslaved people. These Israelites were delivered by God's grace.

[13:30] They were led by the Lord himself. They also were led to pass through the waters of judgment. On the other side, they are joyful. They're emboldened.

They're now a nation that God created. The church is God's new creation. Creation dictates the mission of God's people.

The third proof is this. God gives his living word to the world through the church. God gives his living word to the world through his church.

Notice what happens next in Acts chapter 2. Starting at verse 3, we read that divided tongues as of fire appeared to them and rested on each one of them.

This image of a fire resting on God's people for these Jews who were going to worship in Jerusalem, it would have been a reminder of the temple, the lamp, the presence of God in the temple, the place where he dwells.

[14:36] The Holy Spirit is teaching the church that you now, you people who God has purchased, are his temple. They were all filled with the Holy Spirit.

See, you church, you are the ones now on whom God's spirit rests and dwells. God ministered to his people by the presence of his spirit.

We continue reading that they began to speak in other tongues as the spirit gave them utterance. And now there were dwelling in Jerusalem, Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven. And at this sound, the multitude came together and they were bewildered because each one was hearing them speak in his own language. What God promised would happen to Abraham that through you, all the nations of the earth will be blessed.

It was begun. Verse 14, Peter, remember this is the same man, the same disciple who had fled, who was fearful, who had denied Jesus three times.

[15:43] Now by the power of the Holy Spirit in him stood up with the 11 and he lifted up his voice and addressed the crowd. Look at verse 16. This is what was uttered through the prophet Joel.

It shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out my spirit on all flesh. Not just Jews, but people from every nation, tribe, and tongue will receive the Holy Spirit because God himself will pour out his Holy Spirit on these people.

It was God's eternal plan to manifest his glory in his church to the world. God gives his living word to the world through his church.

See, the church is plan A. The church is what God has designed. And the church is also the vehicle through which his mission will be accomplished.

And our full participation in the life of his church is the goal. It's to be enlisted, to be raised up as that army. Of the kingdom of heaven here on earth.

[16:55] We see God through his ministry within a local church. And we know God more and more and more through the ministry of a local church.

We get to be part of that. In fact, that is our mission. It's to give God to the world through his word. So here's the response.

Oh, I'm sorry. I said there's four proofs and then a response. We got to do the fourth proof. The church's mission is to declare God's redemption in Jesus Christ. The fulfillment of God's word.

Remember, I made that joke about a Navy SEAL sitting around to do something other than the mission for which they were created. Well, what is the mission of the church? The mission of the church is to declare God's redemption in Jesus Christ as the fulfillment of God's word.

It's that simple. I want to show you how Peter did this, but let me make sure we understand and appreciate why this is so important. If we as a church lose sight of this, I'll be more specific.

[18:04] If I start to lose sight of our simple mission, you as the church need to hold me accountable. We need to hold one another accountable because it would be just as ridiculous as Navy SEALs sitting around sewing quilts.

That's not why we were created. That's not our mission. So this is what the New Testament church did. I want you to please turn to 1 Peter 2.

Remember, Peter is the one who stood up. Peter is standing up as a representative of the disciples of Jesus as one of the apostles. He also becomes an elder of a local church.

And as such, listen to how the Holy Spirit through whom he's breathing out New Testament passages, ministers, and fulfills the mission of the church. 1 Peter 2.

I want you to see the words that Peter uses. And so you're not having to flip all over your Bible. I want you to listen carefully when I read the Old Testament passage he's alluding to.

[19:03] Then you see the New Testament fulfillment. So starting at verse 5. 1 Peter 2, verse 5. Here's how the church carries out that simple mission of declaring God's redemption in Jesus Christ the fulfillment of God's word, the full counsel.

You're looking at verse 5. Now listen to Isaiah 61.6. God promises, you shall be named the priests of the Lord and they shall call you the servants of our God.

Isaiah's prophesying that this is what the kingdom of God will be like. Notice what Peter wrote.

Chapter 2, verse 5. It confirms the fulfillment. You church also as living stones are being built up as a spiritual house, a temple to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Verses 6 and 8 say Jesus is the cornerstone of this house, his temple, this church. Do you see how Isaiah 61 is fulfilled? The church now will be called priests of the Lord, servants of our God.

The next example, Malachi 1.11, God promised, for from the rising of the sun to its setting, my name shall be great among the nations and in every place increase shall be offered to my name

and a pure offering.

[20:27] And in 1 Peter 2, verse 5, he confirms the fulfillment. God created you church to offer these spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ.

Third example, Exodus 19.6, God promised, you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. In 1 Peter 2, verse 9, God confirms the fulfillment in the church.

You are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation church. That's who you are. Fourth example, Psalm 135, verse 4 promises that the Lord has chosen Jacob for himself, Israel for his special or precious treasure.

Now notice the language of 1 Peter 2.9, confirming fulfillment in the church. You are his own special, precious people church that you may proclaim the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light.

Fifth example, Hosea 2.28, God promised, I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy. Then I will say to those who were not my people, you are my people and they shall say, you are my God.

[21:39] In 1 Peter 2.10, confirms fulfillment in the church. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God. Once you were a people who had not obtained mercy, but now you have obtained God's mercy.

Do you see the fulfillment? Do you see what the church does? The church shows that in Christ, all that God has planned and intended and promised for our redemption, it's fulfilled through the church.

You and me, Jews and Gentiles, Brazilians and Scots, Mexicans and Koreans, all of us, we have obtained mercy through Jesus Christ.

Let's turn back to Acts 2. I want to show you a couple more things in Acts 2, including our response. While you're turning there, remember these other fulfillments in Jesus Christ.

In Genesis 12, 1-3, Abraham's seed will go from this country and from this kindred to your father's house to a land that I will show you and I will make of you a great nation and I will bless you and make your name great that you will be a blessing and I will bless those who bless you and him who dishonors you I will curse and in you, all the families of the earth shall be blessed.

[23:02] It's fulfilled in Jesus Christ, the family of God that he accomplished. In Hosea 11, 1, God promised, out of Egypt, I called my son. Matthew 2 says, that's why Jesus was taken to Egypt to fulfill that.

Israel spent 40 days testing in the wilderness and our Lord Jesus Christ, his active obedience, 40 days, I'm sorry, Israel was 40 years testing in Jesus, 40 days in the wilderness to replace their sin, his active obedience in the place of their sin, their failure.

Our Lord Jesus Christ fulfilled what all of his people came short on. That's why Galatians 6, 15 and 16 says, in Christ Jesus, you are a new creation and as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them and upon all the Israel of God, which is the church.

The church is not God's plan B. The church is not a parentheses in redemptive history. The church is the bride of the Lord all along.

All who put their faith in God's promises fulfilled by the Messiah is the only way to be saved. And the church is God's fulfillment. The church is plan A and you and me get to be part of it.

[24:26] God created it and therefore it's his mission for us as people. So here's our call to action. Here's our one response. What does this mean for you and me? Let's look at Acts chapter 2, verse 38.

Then Peter said, repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit for the promises to you and to your children and to all who are afar off.

As many as the Lord, our God will call. With many other words, he testified and exhorted them saying, be saved from this perverse generation.

Ephesians 1.22 reminds us that God has put all things under Christ's feet and gave him as head over all things to the church.

Genesis 1.28, that old command given to the first federal head, be fruitful and increase in number, fill the earth and rule over it, can only be fulfilled in Jesus Christ.

[25:37] And that's the command he gives his church. Matthew 28, go where? Into all the world. And as Christians, we respond this way.

Jesus is the king. We're his army. He created us for a special mission. We are all in, in his kingdom. In verse 41, they responded that same way.

Those who gladly received his word. What did they do? They were baptized. About that day, 3,000 were added to their number. John Calvin commented, there is no other way to enter into eternal life unless the church gives birth to a person.

What he means is the church has been entrusted with the treasures of the gospel. By preaching Christ, by preaching the gospel, the spirit uses the ministry of the church to give birth, to give spiritual life to those who were dead.

Calvin goes on to say, unless the church nourishes us and keeps us under her care and guidance, and we remain pupils in the church for all our lives.

[26:50] In verse 42, they continued steadfastly in the apostles' doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in the prayers. We read in 2 Corinthians 8, 5, that the church members gave themselves to the Lord and to one another.

To be a Christian is to give yourself to the Lord and to one another somewhere at a local church. Our confession of faith, chapter 26, verse 3, summarizes this teaching this way.

Christ always has had and ever shall have a kingdom where? In this world, even to the very end, a kingdom of those who believe in him and profess his name on earth, just as it is in heaven.

You want to have a higher view of Christ. Praise God. I want that also. So let his word give you a higher view of his bride.

You want to experience more of the life of the kingdom of heaven, don't you? I know I do. So make his kingdom on earth, his church, a higher place in your life in Christ.

[28:05] Now, you want to know the powerful presence of Christ. So put yourself as much as you can with those among whom he makes his presence known, his church.

God, who created the church by his word, dictates the form of the church, the rules and the mission of the church. We are his church living out his mission for his glory alone.

Amen. Let's pray and thank him. Lord, we thank you that you brought us from nothing. We were like dry bones scattered on a valley.

Yet you created us and you breathed life into us individually, but also as a local expression of the kingdom of heaven. We thank you, Lord, that you have given us such a clear, simple mission.

We confess, Lord, we're so weak on our own. Our flesh hates this. The world opposes it. The demons go to battle against the advance of your kingdom through the local church.

[29:13] Lord, we can do nothing apart from you. We're like the weak army of Israel. We're cowards on our own. But we trust that Jesus Christ continues. He's alive and he continues to march in front of his army to shield us and to lead his army.

A willing church marching one step after the other patiently. full of grace after him. We pray that you will be glorified, Lord, in our lives and in this congregation in a special way.

We pray that you will continue to lead us, Lord. Please don't remove your presence, the lampstand, the light from this congregation. But we do ask, Lord, that like that mighty wind, your Holy Spirit will continue to move, to breathe life where there's death, to heal where there's wounds, that you'll do all of this for Christ's sake and for your glory alone, we pray.

Amen. Let's spend a moment responding to the Lord and then soon I'll lead us toward his table.

Amen. Amen.