

Mission is done by every Christian

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Preacher: The Most Reverend Gregory Venables

[0 : 00] Can I say, first of all, that I consider it an enormous privilege to be with you here today. And it's a great joy also for Sylvia, for Bishop Bill, for Canon Chris, to be here at this time in Vancouver, at this crucial time. As I said in the conference we've just been having over the last couple of days, to quote Charles Dickens from *A Tale of Two Cities*, it's the best of times and it's the worst of times, if you know what I mean. It's tragic, but there has been no option. People often, the press especially, use the word schism.

Schism. But schism is sinful. Schism is when you separate on secondary issues. And what we're facing here is some people, by no means all in any way, who have knowingly left the word of God, who have knowingly left the Lord Jesus Christ, who is God made man. And we cannot keep quiet, because to keep quiet would be to be complicit with a message which will lead people away from eternal security. My concern is that while all this is unfolding on the world stage, we shall miss the whole point.

I remember once praying to the Lord, Lord, why don't you just take me now? I believe various people have prayed that over the years. Because you'll save yourself an awful lot of problems. And the Lord says, because you've got a lot to do yet. The reason why the Lord leaves us as saved people, as converted people, as the followers of Jesus in this world, is because he's committed us to the mission of the church. And that is what I believe has to be our priority.

Everything else, however vital and important it is, has to take second place to the mission of the church. So my words to you this morning, simply, and I hope clearly, are that we've got to get on with the main purpose of the church, which is to share this wonderful good news with a world that is living in confusion and ignorance. If this present generation doesn't turn to Jesus, it won't be so much that they've rejected him, but rather than they've never heard of him.

[3 : 35] I don't know whether you realize it, I don't know how things are here in Canada, but in the United Kingdom, if you were to take the school's dictionary, one of the dictionaries that they use in a lot of schools, and look up the word Jesus or the word Christ, you would find that the main meaning is an exclamation of disgust or surprise.

People no longer know who they are. And more tragically, people no longer realize that they are the creation of God and that they need salvation.

I just want to open briefly that passage which we had read to us from Isaiah chapter 6, if you could turn to that with me.

Isaiah chapter 6, which in many ways speaks very clearly about where we're at. Isaiah was called at a time when the people of God were facing a very similar situation.

Even though people had the word and the law of God, they turned away from it. They turned away from what God had said, and they turned away from the God who had spoken.

[5 : 01] And Isaiah was given that difficult task of announcing to them what God was saying. But it didn't begin with Isaiah.

And if we make a mistake at the present time in the church, it's because we are far too anthropocentric, we're far too us-centered, and not Christ-centered.

Isaiah did mission, became a mouthpiece of God. First of all, because God called him.

So before you or I begin to consider what we have to do, you have to answer the question, have I heard God calling me? Have I heard that voice of God calling me?

It wasn't that Isaiah got up in that morning and said while he was having his breakfast with Mrs. Isaiah, well I better get to the temple because I'm going to have a vision this morning. God surprised him.

[6 : 12] It was God who called him. That doesn't mean we don't seek God. But at the end of the day, if anything happens, it's because God is seeking you.

The wonderful message of salvation isn't that you found your way back to God with your thinking, with your behavior, with your willpower. It's that Jesus came looking for you. It's not that the shepherd finds its way back.

It's not that the sheep finds its way back to the shepherd. It's the shepherd that comes looking for the sheep. Have you heard God calling you? Because if you haven't yet responded to that voice, you can't even begin to think what we're talking about today.

Christianity is about God calling us. Noah didn't wake up one morning and say, I'm going to build a boat. I think it's unlikely he even knew what a boat was.

Abraham didn't wake up one morning and say, Sarah, I'm going to be the father of the nations. God called him to be the father of the nations. Moses didn't get out of bed one morning and say, well, I'm back to Egypt, dear.

[7 : 24] I've got to go and save God's people from captivity. God called him. Mary didn't say to her mum, well, mum, I'm going to be the mother of the Messiah.

God called her. Have you heard that voice? Have you heard the voice of God? Do you know what he calls me?

Greg. Do you know why? Because he's a personal God. God called Terry. God called Cheryl.

That was a big surprise for both of you, wasn't it? God called Sylvia. God calls us because he is a personal God. And it begins with God calling us.

But notice this God who calls us to do mission. And this is an extremely important point.

[8 : 26] Is a great God. J.B. Phillips wrote that little book many years ago now. Your God is too small. By which he meant was.

By which he meant your concept of God is tiny. Get a bigger vision. Isaiah knew God was great. He saw him high and lifted up.

God. The Lord help us to see how great he is. Most of your problems today. If not all will be solved. If you could only see how great God is.

How big he is. That he is. That he is powerful. That he is almighty. That he is all knowing.

That he is all present. You can't get away from him. Psalm 139. Where will I go to get away from you? Nowhere says God. We did a series of studies on what we call the attributes of God.

[9 : 29] In Bolivia. Many years ago now. For six months we just looked at who God is. And after six months.

A lady psychologist. Who had a lot of problems. Not because she was a psychologist. Who lived in very difficult circumstances. Many of them caused by her.

Came to me and she said. Thank you for the studies. I no longer have to take my sleeping pills.

Pills. Now she was still the same person. She still lived in the same circumstances.

But she had caught a vision. Of who God is. And that had transformed everything. She now. In those circumstances. With her temperament.

Saw that God was greater. God is much bigger than anything you are facing at the present moment. There is nothing.

[10 : 27] In the whole of the universe. That God cannot solve like that. God. And if we are going to be obedient to God.

We must see how big he is. Otherwise we will always be. Floundering around. In a sense of impossibility.

And notice too. That this God who calls us.

And this God who is great. Is also holy. And without exaggeration.

I think one might say. If there is an aspect of who God is. That the church has missed. In recent years. It is probably that. I had the.

[11 : 27] I won't say the misfortune. That wouldn't be kind. Would it? I was at the Lambeth Conference. In 1998. And I am glad I was there. But it was a. Weird experience.

Some good things were done. Can you imagine. Over 800 bishops. All meeting together. In the same place. Do you know what the collective. Noun.

For bishops. Is. A surplus. It's not true.

It's not true. It was. It was like a sort of. Ecclesiastical. One flew over the cuckoo's nest. But.

This is the point. I want to make. If there was. One. Word. That was taboo. You know. There's generally. In society. There are things.

[12:27] You don't say. And comedians. Make a great deal of money. By saying the things. That we know. We mustn't say. But if there was one word. At Lambeth 98.

That. Everybody was holding their breath about. And nobody wanted to use. Or very few people. Wanted to use. Even though there were. Hundreds and hundreds and hundreds. And. Of church leaders there.

The word. That was taboo. For many. Was the word. Sin. We use any euphemism.

We seek any way. To talk about it. Forgetting. That if you don't talk about it. You cannot talk about salvation. How can you begin.

To preach. The gospel of Jesus Christ. How can you begin. To preach. The wonderful news. Of salvation. If you don't. Mention. The fact.

[13:24] That our problem. Is our disobedience. Our problem. Is our sin. Our problem. Is our rebellion. Against God. That God has given us. Free will. We get to choose.

And we have chosen. To turn our backs on God. The problem. With the world. At this present moment. In history. Is that we're living. In a world. Created by God.

As if God. Does not exist. And that's why. We live in the confusion. In which we live. God.

God. Isn't just holy. God is holy. Holy. Holy. We spent the 20th century. Improving our circumstances.

And our education. Confident. That with better education. And better living conditions. We will sort all our problems out. And what did we find at the end? We were in the same place.

[14:22] As one of our dear friends. Used to say. When she moved. It's the same old mess. At a different address. Because the problem is not.

The lack of knowledge. Even though we need more knowledge. The problem is not in our circumstances. The problem is in our heart. That God says. Yes. And you say no.

That God says no. And you say yes. And that's your problem. And there's only one way to put it right. The cross of Jesus Christ. And the empty tomb.

Christ died on the cross. First of all. So that you can be forgiven. And then. He came to life. So that you can be given new life. It's not enough to be forgiven.

You've got to be born again. Otherwise you'll just go on. Doing everything that you did before. Paul said it. Romans chapter 7. The trouble is. I know what I should do. But I don't do it. I know what I shouldn't do.

[15:23] And it's the very thing I do. You need to be transformed. From the inside. And that's what God does. You need to have your mind.

Renewed. By the word of God. And you need to have your heart. Transformed. By God's spirit. The big problem nowadays.

Is that we say. Well that's pretty intolerant. Isn't it? How can you possibly say. Jesus is the only way. I'm sorry. That doesn't fit in with my culture. So tomorrow morning.

Terry. Somebody comes to you. And you say. Well I'm very sorry. You're very sick. And I'm sorry to have to tell you that. But there's one remedy for it. And the guy says.

Well I'm sorry. My culture doesn't allow one remedy. I need ten. So that I can choose. Christianity is intolerant. There is only one who said.

[16:23] I am the way. The truth. And the life. And he didn't just say that. He said. No one comes to the father. But. By me. That's intolerant.

Modern society. Will be offended by that. A man. Interviewing me on the knees. On the news. On the knees. He probably was. On the news once. Said to me.

That sounds pretty intolerant. I said it is. It's offensive. To the human heart. Paul said it. The cross is an offense.

And yet what do we do with the cross? We glory in it. Why am I here today? Because God in his mercy. Pulled me out of the pit. And I don't want to let go of that hand.

I don't want to let go of that hand. I've been in the pit. I don't want to go back. But you can't begin to think about that.

[17:23] And to talk about it. Without. Recognizing. That God. Is holy. How am I doing? Now I'm saying that because.

I suddenly realized. I hadn't looked at my watch. I know it's Sunday. The result. Of all that.

God calls us. A great God. Who is holy. And who forgives us. Isaiah had a big problem. In order to be. The spokesman of God.

He had a dirty mouth. Like a lot of people. One of my dear friends is Luis Palau. Great Argentine evangelist. He was converted. By a Scottish missionary.

In Argentina. Many years ago now. He was known as. As the one with the dirty mouth. In those days. They used to wash. Mouths out with soap and water. When Luis walked into the room.

[18 : 23] They would say. Soap. Hi Luis. And God used him. To be the spokesperson. Same as Isaiah.

But you've got to get cleaned. Have you been washed? Inside and out? Because only Jesus can do that as well.

And once that has happened. When God says. Who will go? You'll say. Here am I. I've got no other purpose in my life. Once I know all this. Once I've seen you. I've got nowhere else to go.

Once you've seen Jesus. Where do you go? Everything else is. Nothing. Compared to Jesus. Once you've looked at Jesus. In the face.

Once you've seen God. Who is love. In the face of Christ. There's nowhere else. Makes any sense whatsoever. Paul.

[19 : 21] Peter said it. Didn't they? Where can we go Lord? We know you now. And Isaiah said. Here am I. Send me.

Have you said that? Because that's the only response. To what God has said. Can I ask you.

A very important thing. I mentioned when. Your dear. Rector. Asked me. How we ended up in Latin America.

How that happened. We said to the Lord. What do you want us to do? Can I please. If you haven't done it already. Invite you. Before the day is over. To get on your knees.

And to say to God. What you want me to do. And then let him surprise you. You'll probably have to move out of your comfort zone. But I don't even apologize for that.

[20 : 23] Please. Remember. That the vast majority of the world. Still need to hear about Jesus. And if we don't tell them. Who will.

And there's no other. Way. I was in a church once. And I said. Could you. Could you look up. John chapter 22.

And they all looked it up. I won't play that game on you today. There's an apocryphal story. Of when the Lord goes back to heaven. After the resurrection.

And they have a party. An Argentine barbecue. Of course. With lots of good Argentine wine. I'm giving you a hard time to them. I tell you. And at some point.

While the Lord is sitting there. Just. Greeting everybody. After his time on earth. A little angel comes up. And says. Hi Jesus. And Jesus says. Hi. How are you doing? He says.

[21 : 24] So. What happens now? And Jesus said. Well. They get on with it. And the little angel said. Excuse me Lord. But. Who? And he said.

Well you know. My followers. Peter. James. John. And the angel. And the angel looked a little troubled. And said. So what's plan B?

And the Lord said. There is no plan B. Let's pray. Lord. Lord. Your word challenges us.

Please. Don't. Allow. Any of us. To allow that seed. To be removed from our heart. May that seed of your word.

Take root. And grow up. And bear much fruit. And may our lives. In the time you have allotted to us.

[22 : 39] In this world. Be used. For your glory. And for the extension of your kingdom. We ask it in the name of Jesus. Amen.

Amen. Please kneel for prayer. Dear Lord.

We praise and thank you. For the freedom to worship together. Hear your holy word. And now pray before you. May we at St. John.

Show you humility. Reverence. And sincerity of heart. As we commune with you in prayer. We give thanks for this morning scripture passage.

With its message of God's holiness. And power in our lives. Thank you Lord. For your perfection. In justice. And mercy. And your forgiveness of our sins.

[23 : 39] We praise you. We praise you for our salvation. And our mission to share your gospel. May we be a people of obedience to you. Strong in our faith.

Humble in spirit. Full of your love and joy. And mercy towards others. Dear Lord. Let us be your messengers of hope.

Truth. And new life. In you. Transform our mind and heart. To be Christ centered. Thank you for your commissioning. Of the prophet Isaiah.

And the apostle Paul. May we like Isaiah. Respond to your call. And say. Here am I. Send me. Lord in your mercy. Heavenly Father.

We pray for our world. In need of your love. Peace and mercy. In particular. We pray for those areas of the world. Experiencing severe conflict. Disease. Poverty and hunger.

[24 : 38] May you have mercy. On the innocent who suffer. And bring your everlasting peace. Through Christ Jesus. To these areas. Of human misery.

We pray especially. For the plight of the people. In Zimbabwe. And the resolution. Of the election. Also for peace in Burundi. And restoration of order.

Lord God. Reveal your wisdom. Vision and courage. To these African nations. May we as Christians. Be generous. And compassionate. In giving to our world.

In need. Lord in your mercy. Heavenly Father. We pray for our missionaries. That carry your truth. And love to people.

Near and far. We ask that we be generous. In supporting them. And sensitive to their needs. In particular. We ask for your blessing. And protection. Of our missionaries. In Vancouver.

[25 : 32] Paul Ratsoy. Dan and Fran Gow. Richie Spidell. And Marion Maxwell. In Canada. Catherine Gannett. And overseas.

Sharon Thompson. Alan and Eileen Vanderwaard. And Heather Bellamy. Lastly. We pray for the upcoming. Rico Tice mission. Here at St. John's. May many people here.

Understand. And receive your gospel. Please bless. And protect his ministry. Here and in the world. Lord in your mercy. Amen. Father God.

May your wisdom. And truth. Guide the Anglican Church. At home. And abroad. We praise you. For your faithfulness. During challenging times. May we be a witness. To your grace.

And truth. And glorify you. In all we do. We thank you. For this weekend's. National conference. Of the Anglican Network. In Canada. May you be magnified.

[26 : 26] In this time. Of celebration. Commissioning. And focus. On gospel driven missions. Please continue. To bless the work. Of the NIC. As it strives.

To be faithful. To scripture. Obedient. To the leading. Of the Holy Spirit. And true. To authentic. Anglicanism. We give thanks. To the clergy. And congregations.

Commissioned for ministry. At this conference. We praise you. We praise you. For the faithful clergy. Spouses. Families. Laity. And staff. In the ANIC.

Lord God. Provide encouragement. And joy. In serving you. May they have your wisdom. Strength. And grace. Please provide rest. Rejuvenation.

Spiritual. And physical protection. For them. As a congregation. May we support. And uphold. These leaders. In particular. We pray for Archbishop Venables.

[27 : 21] And the church. In South America. We praise you. For his desire. To stay close to you. And your joy. So evident. In his life. And words.

We also ask your blessing. Upon Bishop Harvey. And Bishop Harding. We give great thanks. For these courageous men. As they share your gospel. In Canada.

And the world. Lord in your mercy. Amen. Amen. Heavenly Father. We bring before you. The sick. And the suffering. In this parish. We remember those.

Who are grieving. The loss of loved ones. Lord. We also bring before you. Any broken relationships. Which need your healing hand. Please give us a heart. For peace. And repentance.

Father. We pray for those. Who face physical. Or mental illness. We ask that you will. Grant them courage. Comfort. Proper medical attention. And return to good health.

[28 : 16] In particular. We pray for. Rosemary. Rowena. Fiona. Barbara. Irwin. And Joanna. And we take a moment.

To remember others. Close to our hearts. Lord in your mercy.

In closing. May we claim as our own. These words from Isaiah. Holy. Holy. Holy. Is the Lord of hosts. The whole earth. Is full of his glory.

Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen. Amen.